

THE GRAMMAR BOOK

**Form, Meaning, and Use
for English Language Teachers**

THIRD EDITION

Diane Larsen-Freeman
Marianne Celce-Murcia

(with Jan Frodesen, Benjamin White, and Howard Williams)



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and Use for English Language Teachers,
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Howard Williams)**

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*To our grandchildren
Thea, Noah, and Lucia
and
Kyle, Scott, Danielle, and Joel*

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To the Instructor

We have included more material in this text than you can teach in a one-term course that deals with English grammar for teachers. To include less would have been unconscionable since we believe that teachers need to be familiar with all the topics in this book. A one-term course, then, should aim not only to teach a portion of the chapters in the text, but also lay a foundation that will enable students to continue to use the book after the course is completed. Hopefully, we have helped you to accomplish this by giving readers a framework and providing practice in investigating grammar, rather than simply supplying readers with a compendium of facts about English.

One of the greatest challenges in teaching this course is helping students overcome the anxiety about the study of grammar that they sometimes bring with them. One of the greatest rewards is watching students move from anxiety to curiosity. This does happen. We have been privileged to see it.

Happy teaching!

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Preface

It is hard to believe that the first edition of this book appeared in 1983—more than 30 years ago! A number of significant changes have taken place since then: generative grammar is no longer ascendant, English is seen as an international lingua franca, and technological aids to research, teaching, and learning are ubiquitous, to name only a few. What has not changed is the value of teachers having a thorough grounding in their subject matter, and grammar is certainly an important component of this subject matter knowledge base for language teachers.

Nevertheless, grammar teaching has often been singled out for harsh criticism. Such aversion stems from the fact that some language teaching methods rely exclusively or predominantly on the teaching of grammar, or that language students are frustrated by all the exceptions to the rules or by their inability to communicate and to their being penalized for inaccuracy. Our grammar is broader than a compilation of rules governing accurate form. We try to help teachers, and consequently their students, understand how English grammar “works” communicatively. We do not see grammar as sterile, but rather as a rich resource for making meaning in contextually appropriate usage—hence our subtitle: *Form, Meaning, and Use*.

Another word about our subtitle is in order. The subtitle in previous editions was *An ESL/EFL Teacher’s Course*. In preparing this edition, we have become aware that “English as a second language” and “English as a foreign language” are not always used as designations for teachers of English these days. Some call themselves “teachers of English as an additional language” or “teachers of English language learners.” This is partly because it is not always so easy to distinguish English as a second language from English as a foreign language in actual situations of use. There is also a need to consider the multiple languages that students are exposed to and that they use to different extents throughout their lives. For many of these students, English is not a “second” language. Further compounding the dilemma is that in this interconnected world of ours, some learners of English are more interested in using English for international communication among themselves, rather than learning it in accordance with Standard English norms as a second or foreign language. Thus, although we continue to use the term *ESL/EFL* in the text itself due to its prominence (for example, in the names of our professional associations [e.g., IATEFL] and degree programs), in an attempt to serve the inclusive audience that this book is intended for, our subheading now reads *for English Language Teachers*.

The Grammar Book: Form, Meaning, and Use for English Language Teachers is designed to help prospective and practicing teachers of English to enhance their understanding of English grammar, expand their skills in linguistic analysis, and develop a pedagogical approach to teaching English grammar.

Each chapter in the third edition of *The Grammar Book* is designed to lead readers systematically from an understanding of the grammar topic to an ability to use this

understanding in the English language classroom. After the first two introductory chapters, each chapter includes:

- A core presentation of a particular grammatical topic. Descriptions and examples draw upon the latest linguistics and applied linguistic research and include discussions of problems that learners regularly encounter
- Suggestions for teaching the form, meaning, and use of constructions to English language students
- Comprehension and application exercises that enable readers to assess their understanding of the material and to apply what has been presented
- A list of references cited
- Suggestions for further reading, consisting of grammar texts, grammar reference guides, and published linguistic research that provide further information regarding the analysis and teaching of the points covered

At the end of the text, we have also included detailed suggested answers to the chapter exercises.

New to the Third Edition

- Updated explanations of the form, meaning, and use of grammatical constructions, which draw on new research findings, especially from cognitive linguistics (for meaning) and corpus linguistics (for use)
- Contrastive information that alerts teachers to possible cross-linguistic influence and helps teachers to identify the learning challenges of their students
- Increased accessibility of the grammatical descriptions to guide teachers to address their students' learning challenges
- New applications in the form of teaching suggestions, exercises, and further readings

About the Authors

Diane Larsen-Freeman and Marianne Celce-Murcia have long been leaders in the field of second language pedagogy.

Diane Larsen-Freeman is professor emerita of education, professor emerita of linguistics, research scientist emerita, and the former director of the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is currently a visiting senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania. She is also a distinguished senior faculty fellow at the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont. In addition to her co-authorship of *The Grammar Book*, Diane is the editor of *Discourse Analysis in Second Language Research*, co-author (with Marti Anderson) of the third edition of *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*, co-author (with Michael Long) of *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research*, author of *Teaching Language: From Grammar to Grammarizing* of the *TeacherSource* series, co-author (with Lynne Cameron) of *Complex Systems and Applied Linguistics*, co-editor (with Nick Ellis) of *Language as a Complex Adaptive System*, and series director of *Grammar Dimensions: Form, Meaning, and Use*.

Marianne Celce-Murcia is professor emerita of applied linguistics and TESL at the University of California, Los Angeles. In addition to co-authorship of *The Grammar Book*, Marianne is co-editor (with Donna Brinton and Marguerite Ann Snow) of the fourth edition of *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. She is also co-series editor (with Maggie Sokolik) of the five-volume, content-based *Grammar Connection* series. She is also co-author of *Techniques and Resources in Teaching Grammar* (with Sharon Hilles), *Teaching Pronunciation* (with Donna Brinton and Janet Goodwin), and *Discourse and Context in Language Teaching* (with Elite Olshtain).

Introduction

What Is Grammar?

Probably the most common definition of *grammar* is that it is a set of rules that describes the structure of sentences or parts of them. For instance, one word-order rule states that English adjectives precede nouns, so in English we say “white rice,” not “rice white.” While this definition is not incorrect, in this book, we adopt a broader view of grammar. We do so out of conviction that there is theoretical and empirical support for such a view. We also do so because we think that broadening our view of grammar makes teachers better prepared to work with ESL/EFL students. Quite honestly, some new teachers are afraid of grammar. They fear that they do not know enough to teach it, or that they will get the rules wrong. It is our hope that such teachers will come to see that the study of grammar is not about the study of mechanical rules. The study of grammar is truly fascinating! Indeed, we might go so far as to say that grammar is a meaning-making resource and that our ability to speak grammatically is one of the things that makes us human!

LEXICOGRAMMAR

One way that our conception of grammar is broader than the common definition is that, for us, grammar is not only about structure. In fact, we think that grammar is interconnected with the lexicon (or vocabulary) of a language. For this reason, we prefer the term *lexicogrammar*. For instance, English speakers who use a camera to capture an image say that they are “taking a photograph.” German, Polish, and Spanish speakers say that they are “making a photograph.” While English speakers would understand the other speakers, the lexicogrammatical resources that English speakers use extends to their choosing a different verb for this pattern. Both phrases work fine in their respective contexts. Notice also that both “taking a photograph” and “making a photograph” have the same structure; therefore, a rule of English word order would not distinguish them. And herein lies a second difference. Not only is it the case that vocabulary and grammar are intertwined; it is also true that language is less governed by rules and more made up of patterns. These days, the patterns of language are often referred to as “constructions” (Tomasello, 2003).

CONSTRUCTIONS

A construction is a form that has meaning. Constructions can be found at many different levels of language. For example, the *-ed* grammatical morpheme is a construction when added to a verb to contribute the meaning of “past,” e.g., *walk* + *-ed* = *walked*. Similarly, a sequence

of two words can be a construction. For example, the phrase *the* + noun is a construction. If you hear the phrase “the child,” you know that a particular child is being referred to. This combination of two words has a different meaning from *a* + noun, as in *a child*, which could mean one of many children. At the level of the sentence, there are also form-meaning patterns. For instance, if we alter the syntax or word order and invert the subject and the verb in a sentence, we create a question, which has a different meaning from the statement: *It is cold.* → *Is it cold?* And there are even patterns above the level of sentence—the suprasentential level—that connect a series of sentences into a text to make the text coherent. For example, in the following pair of sentences, the sentence with the pronouns *she* and *them* follows, not precedes, the first sentence: *Gretchen likes grammar questions. She thinks of them as puzzles to be solved.* While many grammars do not handle text-level grammar, we will.

Another point of departure is that, contrary to some construction grammarians, we don’t stop at the dimensions of form and meaning. This is because in our experience, students need to know not only how to form constructions and what they mean, but when to use particular constructions in appropriate contexts as well. Knowledge of use encompasses how to make texts coherent, as we saw in our example with the two sentences about Gretchen. Use also entails knowing what is socially appropriate in a context. Sticking with pronouns, for example, some speakers consider it inappropriate to use the singular masculine subject pronoun *he* to refer generically to speakers of both sexes, as in *A teacher is hardworking. He even works on weekends.* These speakers might say, “They even work on weekends.”

A DEFINITION OF GRAMMAR

This leads us to our broader definition of grammar: *Grammar is a meaning-making resource. It is made up of lexicogrammatical form, meaning, and use constructions that are appropriate to the context and that operate at the word, phrase, sentence, and textual levels.*

Do not be put off if this definition is unfamiliar to you or even unclear. We will have ample time to consider it in the pages that follow. The point here is to call your attention to the contrast between our definition and traditional thinking about grammar, which positions grammar as separate from the lexicon and which associates it exclusively with rules that describe the way that words and sentences are formed.

RULES, CONVENTIONALIZED PATTERNS, AND REASONS

That said, in this book, we also use the term *rule*, along with the word *pattern*. But there are three qualifications we would like to make to our use of the term *rule* in connection with grammar. The first is that rules are not, as we shall see, airtight formulations; they always have “exceptions.” While rules may serve a useful purpose, particularly in meeting the security needs of beginning language learners as “rules of thumb,” it is important to understand that almost every linguistic category or generalization has fuzzy boundaries. Language is mutable—organic, even; therefore, its categories and rules are often nondiscrete (Rutherford, 1987).

Second, where traditional grammar rules may sometimes be descriptively useful, they do not tell us much about which construction to use in a particular context. To understand why this is so, an additional important feature of language use should be noted—its conventional nature. While all of the following can be accounted for by traditional rules, only the first is conventionally used to propose marriage (Pawley & Syder, 1983, p. 196):

I want to marry you.

I wish to be wedded to you.

I desire you to become married to me.

Your marrying me is desired by me.

My becoming your spouse is what I want.

With the increased access to large corpora of language data that computers afford, it has become clear that constructions occur in a number of recurring patterns. These sequences are sometimes rather fixed, as in “I’ll believe it when I see it.” At other times, the sequences are more open, allowing some substitutions. For example, an English speaker can say, “Tell me what’s happening/going on/up,” etc. We include findings from corpus linguistics in this text.

The third qualification that we make concerning grammar rules is that they often appear to be arbitrary formulations. For example, learners of English are told that it is possible to place a direct object after a certain kind of two-word, or phrasal, verb when the direct object is a noun, but not when the direct object is a pronoun. The asterisk before the second example is a linguistic convention used to indicate ungrammaticality:

I looked up a word in the dictionary. (Direct object *word* is a noun.)

***I looked up it in the dictionary.** (Direct object *it* is a pronoun.)

Such formulations do appear to be arbitrary; and yet, if one views this very same rule from a discourse or text-level perspective, we see that this rule is one manifestation of an important cognitive principle of information structuring, which we introduce first in Chapter 2 and then revisit throughout the remainder of the book. Therefore, at least some of the arbitrariness of rules disappears when we view language above the sentential level.

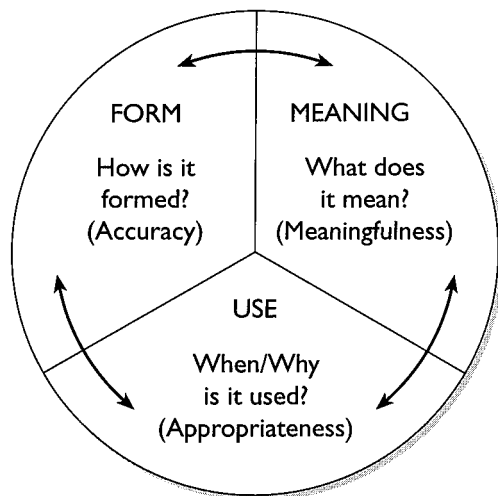
Indeed, what we seek to do in this book is to give *reasons*, not *rules*, for why English grammar functions as it does. Subsentential and sentential rules can sometimes appear arbitrary and make learning more difficult. Giving students reasons for why things are the way they are can aid students in learning English grammar. To do so respects their intelligence, helps them understand why English speakers use the language as they do, and promotes their autonomy as learners. It also helps students see how grammar and communication interface, thus addressing, although not entirely solving, the common problem of students’ not being able to activate their knowledge of grammar when they communicate.

THE THREE DIMENSIONS

We made the point earlier that constructions have form and meaning. Because we are attempting to treat grammar with a communicative end in mind, we also wrote that in our book, we will discuss the use of grammar constructions in appropriate contexts. We refer to these as the dimensions of *form*, *meaning*, and *use*. Because the three are interrelated—that is, a change in one will involve a change in another—it is helpful to view the three dimensions as a pie chart, with arrows depicting the interactions among the three (see the next page).

The question in each wedge of the pie provides further guidance in terms of defining what that wedge represents. In dealing with form, for instance, we are interested in *how* a particular grammar construction is formed—its word form (or *morphology*) and its word order (or *syntax*). When dealing with meaning, we want to know *what* a particular English grammar construction means, what *semantic* contribution it makes whenever it is used. Its essential meaning might be grammatical: for example, the *-ed* on *looked* signals a past action. Or its meaning might be lexical (a dictionary definition); for example, the meaning of the phrasal verb *look up* used in our example means “to discover by consulting a reference work.”

Pragmatics, the domain of the use wedge of our pie, deals with issues concerning the choices that users of a particular language make when using the forms of language in texts or social



communication. As such, it is a broad category. We use it in this book to mean the “relations between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a language” (Levinson, 1983, p. 9). We can account successfully for the use of a particular grammar construction if we can explain *when* it is used or *why* it has been used instead of another construction with the same meaning. For instance, we could point to a *register* or difference in the formality of the context to help explain why *to look up* was used instead of *to discover by consulting a reference work*. A different use explanation, one having to do with a principle of information structuring, would be invoked to account for the difference between *I looked up a word in the dictionary* and *I looked a word up in the dictionary*. ESL/EFL students need to know not simply how a construction is formed and what it means; they need to know why speakers of English choose to use one form rather than another when both forms have more or less the same grammatical or lexical meaning.

It is, admittedly, sometimes difficult to establish firm boundaries between the wedges in the pie, especially between the meaning and use wedges; as we have already pointed out, linguistic categories often have fuzzy boundaries. Nevertheless, we have found the three dimensions of the pie chart useful as a conceptual framework for teaching grammar. Since grammar does not deal simply with form, language teachers cannot be content with having students achieve a certain degree of formal accuracy. Language teachers must also help their students to use the constructions meaningfully and to know when they are appropriate to use.

A PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMAR, NOT A LINGUISTIC GRAMMAR

In discussing the accuracy, meaningfulness, and appropriateness of the grammar constructions contained in this book, we have drawn from a number of different linguistic schools of thought. Whereas linguistic grammars strive for internal consistency, pedagogical grammars, such as this one for teachers, are eclectic. We feel that insights into the structure of English can be gleaned from different types of analysis. For instance, certain linguistic theories tend to be formal—most concerned with accounting for well-formed word sequences or sentences. They can be invoked for explaining sentence-level phenomena, such as why the reflexive pronoun *himself* in the following sentence must refer to Paul and not to Steve. (See Chapter 16 for the explanation.)

Steve said that Paul hurt himself in the lacrosse game.

Other theories are more functional, seeking to explain the occurrence of certain linguistic constructions by exploring the communicative function they play in the organization of discourse. We had an example of this earlier when we saw how the use of pronouns provided coherence between two sentences. Since we are interested here in accounting for both sentential and textual or discourse-level phenomena, we look to both formal and functional linguistic theories for helpful insights into English.

Then, too, linguistic grammars are often inaccessible except to those specially trained to work within a particular theory. We have tried to make available linguistic insights without requiring that our readers bring a great deal of linguistic background knowledge with them. We have adopted some formalism, however. For instance, in elucidating the form dimension, we have employed grammar trees. We have found such trees to be a very effective parsing device in analyzing sentence-level syntax, and some linguists even claim that they describe sentences better than any other description of English to date (e.g., Lasnik & Uriagereka, 1988, p. 6). We also have turned to structural linguistics and corpus linguistics for observations relevant to the form dimension. For an understanding of the meaning dimension, we have drawn on insights in traditional, functional, lexical, cognitive, usage-based, and case grammars. For the use dimension, our treatment comes from work in discourse and contextual analysis, conversation analysis, and in systemic functional grammar, and again from usage-based and corpus linguistics.¹ In addition, many of the facts about English that we synthesize for each of the three dimensions originate with our own research and that of our students.

Finally, while many linguistic grammars go into great depth about a restricted set of constructions, pedagogic grammars must be as comprehensive as possible in the number of constructions they treat. We have tried, therefore, to cover the most frequently occurring constructions with which ESL/EFL teachers have to deal in their classes. At the same time, we have been more selective about the amount of detail we include than a linguistic grammar might be. What we have compiled here is information that ESL/EFL teachers have found useful in order to address the learning challenges of their students.

The Learning Process

LEARNING IS COMPLEX

No less important to language teachers than understanding the content of what they are teaching is an understanding of the process by which the content is learned. While it is beyond the scope of this book to treat the language acquisition literature in depth here, suffice it to say that with anything as complicated as language, it is not likely that the learning process will be a simple, invariant one. That is to say, we sincerely doubt that language development could ever be accounted for by attributing it to a single process such as habit formation or rule formation. On the contrary, it is intuitively appealing—to us, at any rate—to attribute language development to a variety of processes, each of which is responsible for some particular aspect of language. For instance, we might hypothesize that associative memory plays a role in the acquisition of *formulaic language* (conventional units such as “How are you?” and “I see what you mean”). On the other hand, pattern detection is a plausible way to describe, although not necessarily explain, the acquisition of generalizations or principles that operate in the language, such as where to place *not* in an English sentence in order to express a negative message. While such attributions are speculative on our part, and we eagerly await the results of the concerted effort that is now being undertaken to research the

efficacy of focusing on form,² we find the exercise useful for thinking about how one might go about teaching the three dimensions of language.

GRAMMARING

Before going on, though, it is important to underscore the point that grammar can be implicitly taught and learned. Therefore, the grammatical descriptions featured in this book are for teachers, whom we hope will use them as aids in their teaching, not as the object of the teaching itself. ESL/EFL teachers should be helping students *to use* English constructions. Thus, ESL/EFL teachers might better think of what they do as teaching *grammaring*—a skill—rather than teaching grammar as an area of knowledge (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

In the interest of balance, having said that grammar can be taught implicitly, let us also offer our view that how teachers help students use English structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately is contingent upon a number of factors, not the least of which are the learners' own particular cognitive styles and the contexts in which they are learning. Teachers may help some students by giving them explicit grammatical descriptions and rules, but doing so may not help others. In a context where exposure to English is limited, explicit teaching of grammar may be desirable. However, importantly, our point here is simply that any explicit grammatical information should be a means to an end, not an end in itself. If a student can recite a rule but can't apply it, we will have failed in our "grammaring" efforts.

What Is Grammar Teaching?

While we hope that it is self-evident that language teachers need to know about the grammar of the language they are teaching, it would be worthwhile to point out that a lot of misunderstanding about grammar teaching comes about because the term can be used to refer to many different practices. Again, if we think in terms of traditional approaches, grammar teaching often entails giving students a grammar rule and asking them to apply it in a written exercise. While this is one way of teaching grammar, our approach to teaching is broader. For one thing, as we have just indicated, grammar teaching can be less direct, more implicit, in the sense that it can include asking students to engage in particular activities in which they are likely to encounter many instances of a particular construction. This has been termed "input flooding." It is also possible for teachers to "enhance the input" by, for example, giving students a written document in which certain constructions are highlighted, such as making all the *-ed* endings on verbs a different color from the rest of the text. Both of these techniques might become "consciousness-raising" activities—if students' attention is directed explicitly to the targeted constructions.

Of course, for many learners, consciousness-raising of this sort is not sufficient in and of itself for mastery of grammar. Students need practice—an opportunity to use a construction in a meaningful and appropriate way. For example, having students read and discuss a weather map to make forecasts for different parts of the country is likely to involve the use of what is called the "nonreferential *it*" and the "be going to" future, or in its contracted form with *It*, *It's going to* ("It's going to snow in Vermont, but it's going to be warm in California."). The point is that practice need not be explicit about which grammar structures are being taught, or even that grammar is being taught at all.

This is not to say that explicit grammar teaching in the way of using grammatical terminology and giving generalizations about patterns (and, yes, even rules) is ineffective.

Often adolescent and adult learners need this kind of instruction. Indeed, in a review of research on grammar teaching, Norris and Ortega (2000) conclude that explicit grammar instruction is an effective means for promoting language learning; it is certainly true that students all over the world have been taught grammar in this way.

There are some researchers, however, who are concerned that a focus on grammatical accuracy will discourage students from using language for communicative or meaningful purposes. Such researchers believe that grammar should only be taught reactively as the need arises, as in correcting students when they make an error (Long, 2007). Even in this regard, the suggestion is to correct as unobtrusively as possible, so as to minimize disruption and avoid student discomfort.

Of course, most of the knowledge of constructions that English speakers have and use is unconscious. They may be aware of some of the rules that they were taught in school, but most of the time, they use grammar without awareness. It is this unconscious ability to comprehend and deploy constructions that most ESL/EFL students want to master. Therefore, using grammatical terminology with students can sometimes be helpful, but the point is that teaching grammar and using grammatical terminology are not equivalent. Nevertheless, grammatical terminology is part of a language teacher's professional knowledge base, and even when teachers are not enthusiastic about using grammatical terminology (see Borg, 1999), it is often the students who insist that it be used. Indeed, you will not be teaching for long before a student poses a question about some lexicogrammatical aspect of the language. To understand and to answer such questions, knowing grammar terms may prove useful.

A MULTIDIMENSIONAL TEACHING APPROACH

We advocate a multidimensional approach—using different teaching techniques for teaching different aspects of the three dimensions. The choice will be informed by the learning challenge. For instance, what we are trying to achieve when we are teaching learners how to form a construction is their being able to accurately produce that construction on their own with the meaning they intend. We submit that what would assist learners to be able to do so is *purposeful iteration, not rote*, repetition of a particular syntactic pattern (Larsen-Freeman, 2012; 2013). An iterative activity gives students multiple opportunities to practice a construction with the meaning that they intend. An example is having students play “twenty questions” to practice *yes/no* question formation.

When working on some part of the meaning wedge of the pie, however, we recommend an activity in which students are given opportunities to associate a particular form with its meaning. An example that springs readily to mind is the Total Physical Response technique that teachers employ to have students learn to associate the meanings of certain phrasal verbs with their forms. The students first watch the teacher, and then later, perform actions themselves signaled by the teacher's use of certain phrasal verbs: *Stand up, turn around, sit down*. Such a simple introduction allows the students to forge a meaningful bond between the form of each verb and its meaning.

To practice the use dimension, the activity should require students to make some choice within a context and to receive feedback on the appropriateness of their choice. For instance, after being introduced to the pragmatic difference between *look a word up* and *look up a word*, students might be asked to fill the blanks in a passage, choosing between the two forms with *look up* as well as the two forms with other phrasal verbs. Further examples of the application of these pedagogical principles will be offered in the teaching suggestions at the end of each chapter of this book.

The three previous examples and most of the others we present in this book are practice activities, appropriate to the middle “p” in the “three p” teaching sequence of *present, practice, produce*, which has long guided teachers of grammar as well as teachers of other aspects of language. It should be acknowledged, however, that with the evolution of more communicative approaches, such as task- or content-based approaches, not all teachers adhere rigidly to this sequence. For instance, it might be that the need to teach grammar arises only when teachers notice that students are struggling to produce (the third “p”) a particular grammatical construction during some communicative activity, or when a particular text presents a grammatical challenge to English language learners. At this point, a teacher might choose to conduct a practice activity, with or without initially presenting (the first “p”) the construction. Alternatively, many teachers today subscribe to the practice of discovery or inductive learning, letting students figure out for themselves the generalizations about a particular grammatical construction. Thus, one teacher might have students engage in some meaningful consciousness-raising task or practice activity first in order for the students themselves to induce the rule that another teacher, following a more traditional approach, might have presented initially.

SEQUENCING GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTIONS

We do not deal explicitly with issues of syllabus design in this text. The issue of learnability, or student readiness to learn a particular construction, has important implications for the selecting and sequencing of content for ESL/EFL students. Unfortunately, not enough is known about learnability at this point to move us to endorse one sequence of grammatical constructions over another, although we do know that students do not master all aspects of one construction before moving on to tackle another. The process of language acquisition is not a matter of simply aggregating one construction after another in linear fashion. The process is a gradual one; and even when learners appear to have mastered a particular construction, regression from a target-language perspective may occur as their attention is diverted to a new learning challenge. Thus, it makes sense to recycle various aspects of the target constructions over a period of time: revisit old constructions, elaborate on them, and use them for points of contrast as new grammatical distinctions are introduced. It also makes sense to think of a grammar syllabus as a checklist rather than an ordered sequence. In this case, it would be a teacher’s responsibility to see that students learn the checklist of grammatical items by the end of a given course or period of time, but the sequence would be left up to the teacher and would depend on his or her own approach and the students’ needs.

Which English?

Another issue for which we should make our assumptions explicit has to do with “which English” we are analyzing here. English is not a single, uniform language. Instead, many dialects of English are spoken around the world. As native speakers of North American English, we have chosen to focus our analysis on this dialect, although we acknowledge that there are many “Englishes.” Though there may be some grammatical differences among dialects of English, they share a significant central core of grammatical constructions and relationships that enables us to speak of the grammar of English. We also, however, attempt to call attention to major exceptions to the generalizations that we make when they do not apply to other dialects, especially to British English.

ON VARIETIES AND VARIABILITY

But even within a particular regional dialect, there is variety. What we describe here is Standard American English. Which variety of English is considered Standard English is the result of historical sociopolitical factors, not linguistic ones. Thus, there is no inherently superior linguistic variety. It is true, however, that those who can use the standard variety of any language enjoy access to opportunities that others lack. This alone is a good reason for helping students in an ESL context learn Standard English.

Of course within Standard English, we also encounter variability. The fact of the matter is that language is both an abstract system and a socially constructed practice. As a social construct, it is fluid, changing as it is used (Larsen-Freeman, 1997). Since our grammar is descriptive of what English speakers do, it must reflect the variable performance of its users. We report the variability where we have usage studies that reflect what speakers judge to be acceptable.

It is important to point out that a book such as this one may give the impression that language use by native speakers (a problematic concept in its own right) is the ultimate target. We make no such claim. Some students may need to pass an international standardized test or wish to study abroad in an English-medium academic institution, in which case native speaker use of a particular variety may be the standard applied. Others, such as English language learners in the U.S., will need to learn not only “general” English, but academic English in order to succeed in U.S. schools. Still others, especially in a context where English is not the environmental language, will perhaps be more interested in using English as a lingua franca, among themselves for local or for international transactions. In such cases, native speaker norms may not be appropriate. Students (and their teachers) will have different aspirations. Whether or not they choose to conform to native speaker use is up to them. We fully appreciate the value of knowing another language, we see any attempt to learn another language as a laudable quest, and we reject comparisons with native speakers that suggest deficiency on the learners’ part.³

ON APPROPRIATENESS OF USE

In the same vein, our category of use especially warrants some explanation. As we have said, there are two components to use: discourse or text considerations and social ones. We illustrated both with the use of pronouns. We want to add here that the appropriateness of social use is not rule-governed, but rather has to do with social conventions. In other words, our example concerning using the pronoun “he” for both a male and a female is not contrary to a grammatical rule; however, as we have written, some individuals might find insensitive the use of “he” to refer to both a male and a female. We feel that it is important for English learners to know how their language use will be perceived, so we give them our perceptions. What learners do with the information, i.e., whether they continue to use the masculine pronoun for individuals of both sexes, is up to each individual.

In short, it would be a misapprehension if we left the impression that learning is a matter of replicating internally an external model. Nor do we want to imply that responsibility for achieving mutual understanding and respect rests solely with the learner. Clearly, understanding is achieved through a negotiated process involving co-adaptation on the part of all speakers. Because language is a complex adaptive system (Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2009), each member of a speech community will come to use language in a unique way. In this book, we are giving you as accurate and up-to-date descriptions as we are capable of. What you decide to teach, and, importantly, what your students decide to learn are matters to be decided locally and individually.

PRESCRIPTIVE AND DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMARS

Along these same lines, we should point out that this is not primarily a prescriptive grammar. We are not prescribing what *should* be said. We are more interested in accounting for what speakers of English *do* say. Prescriptive grammars tell us to say *It is I*, not *It is me*. They also tell us always to use *whom* in object position. A prescriptive grammar can be abused by those who insist on outdated conventions, or those who try to tell others what a form ought to mean rather than the meaning understood in general usage. Nevertheless, we feel that prescriptive grammar has its place in formal writing, at least, and students who are preparing to take standardized examinations like the TOEFL will need to know the prescriptive rules. Thus, while our grammar is mainly descriptive, we will call attention, whenever possible, to different norms where there is an obvious conflict between description and prescription.

A DYNAMIC SYSTEM

Finally, it would be worth pointing out that conceiving of grammar as an inventory of constructions runs the danger of objectifying language—making it a thing, as opposed to a dynamic system (Larsen-Freeman, 1997). The objectification of language (Linell, 2005) is compounded if we think of language only in its written form.⁴ In contrast, our view of grammar is much more aligned with that of Hopper (1998), who sees grammatical forms as “sedimented” out of language use. In other words, certain uses of language recur, and these recurrent patterns then become the “grammar” of the language. We certainly do not see language as an object. Nonetheless, there are patterns in language, and we will call attention to these, and where possible and desirable, we point out the differences between the patterns present in speech and in writing. For instance, we should always remain cognizant of the fact that the patterns are not replicated exactly, that they are subject to change as they are used (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008), and that the social context in which they are used makes a difference (Tarone, 2010). Nowhere is this more evident than in the changing use of language in social media (Crystal, 2001) and through other technologies, a point we return to in the conclusion of this book.

This Book

As you begin your course, we recognize that the sheer length of this book might be intimidating. Just as with everything, you learn as you teach. This book is meant to guide you in understanding the basic constructions of English, but it is also meant to be available to you to use for reference purposes after your course is completed. Because it is a course book and a reference grammar, it contains a lot of detail, which we do not expect you to master, but which we do expect you will find useful to refer to as you teach.

DEFINING THE LEARNING CHALLENGE

Of course, it is not possible to teach everything about English to ESL/EFL students. Further, as instructional time is usually so limited, it is not even possible to teach ESL/EFL students all that is presented in this book. Students may need to learn it, but it doesn't all have to be taught. Where we have attempted to be comprehensive, within limits, ESL/EFL teachers of grammar will have to be selective. Teachers, therefore, have to choose what to focus their students'

attention on, trusting that students will be able to acquire on their own other aspects of English grammar. Thus, it is important that teachers define students' learning challenges: What is it that students most need to learn about a particular structure that they will not easily pick up on their own?

Knowing something about students' native dialect and the language(s) they speak is very helpful in defining students' learning challenges. Although we cannot report all the findings from contrastive linguistics, we selectively include information about different languages and language typologies—that is, how other types of languages differ from English.

Students' learning challenges will depend not only on what knowledge they bring of their native language or dialect, but also upon what they already know about English. Since the most effective instruction builds on what students already know, ESL/EFL teachers should continually informally assess what their students know about English and know how to do in English. It is not teaching if you are showing students how to use a construction that they already know.

It also helps to define students' learning challenges by knowing where English is inherently difficult. Difficulties often arise when constructions are infrequent, unusual, or nonsalient, when one construction has many functions, when there are semantic overlaps among constructions, when their linguistic behavior defies easy generalization, and so on. We hope to contribute to teachers' knowledge about these learning challenges by providing relevant facts about the form, meaning, and use of each major construction of English. With regard to these facts, we have attempted to be as comprehensive as space permits. Knowing, however, that instructional time is so limited, we conclude our treatment of each construction by discussing what our experience has led us to believe are the most challenging aspects of that construction.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHAPTERS

Each chapter includes our analysis of the form, meaning, and use of a particular grammar construction or cluster of constructions and any other pertinent information. Following the analysis, we provide teaching suggestions that illustrate ways of raising students' consciousness about certain aspects of English grammar and providing the necessary structured and communicative practice. We label each of these activities according to the dimension—form, meaning, and/or use—that it addresses. We also include exercises of two types: The first allows you to check your own comprehension of the material presented in each chapter, and the second asks you to apply what you have learned to teaching issues. We also include sample answers to the exercises at the end of the book. The final feature of each chapter is a list of references that allow you to explore further the construction in focus and its teaching.⁵

You Can Learn Grammar!

Many people are under the impression that the facts about a given language are all known. Nothing could be further from the truth. Much is not known about English, particularly at the level of discourse and in the dimension of pragmatics. Thus, one of the reasons that we ask you to work with the formalism and frameworks that we provide is to give you some tools to go beyond the facts presented in this book. We use linguistic terminology for the same reason. Besides giving us a *metalanguage*, a language to talk about language, the use of linguistic terms will allow you to consult reference grammars and other sources in order to augment your knowledge as new facts become known. We are interested, therefore, not

only in your acquiring knowledge from our text but also in your developing the means to go beyond what has been presented here. Incidentally, the pie chart has been a useful tool for us personally in helping us expand our knowledge about English. We can map what we know about a particular grammar structure on a pie chart and create our own research agendas for what we don't know. Many linguistic conundrums await solutions. We call explicit attention to some of these throughout the text, and we encourage you to join us in the fun of trying to figure them out.

It has been our experience that some readers approach the task of learning grammar with some trepidation. While we understand this feeling, we have learned that by carefully reading the material in each chapter and conscientiously doing the exercises at the end, readers can develop a working knowledge of English grammar. Moreover, many actually come away from the experience believing, as we do, that learning grammar is fun!

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For one example of each of the different schools of linguistic thought or types of analysis referred to in this chapter, consult:

Case Grammar:

Fillmore, C. (1968). The case for case. In E. Bach & R. Harms (Eds.), *Universals in linguistic theory* (pp. 1–90). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Cognitive Grammar:

Langacker, R. W. (2009). *Investigations in cognitive grammar*. Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter.

Construction Grammar:

Goldberg, A. (2006). *Constructions at work: The nature of generalization in language*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Contextual Analysis:

Frodesen, J., & Holten, C. (Eds.). (2004). *The power of context in language teaching and learning*. Boston, MA: Heinle.

Conversational Analysis:

Schegloff, E. A. (2007). *Sequence organization in interaction: A primer in conversation analysis*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Corpus Linguistics:

Sinclair, J. (2012). *Essential corpus linguistics*. London, England/New York, NY: Routledge.

Discourse Analysis:

Paltridge, B. (2012). *Discourse analysis: An introduction* (2nd ed.). London, England: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Functional Grammar:

Givón, T. (1995). *Functionalism and grammar*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Lexical Grammar:

Lewis, M. (1993). *The lexical approach*. Hove, England: Language Teaching Publications.

Usage-based Grammar:

Bybee, J. (2010). *Language, usage, and cognition*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Systemic-Functional Grammar:

Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). London, England/New York, NY: Routledge.

Traditional Grammar:

Jespersen, O. (1965). *Syntax: A modern English grammar on historical principles* (Vol. 2), Copenhagen, Denmark: Munksgaard and London, England: Allen & Unwin.

For readers who would like to investigate different issues for teachers of grammar to consider, we recommend:

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- Rutherford, W. (1987). *Second language grammar: Learning and teaching*. London, England: Longman.
- Thornbury, S. (2001). *Uncovering grammar*. Oxford, England: Macmillan Heinemann.

For teachers' books containing ESL/EFL grammar teaching activities, we recommend:

- Celce-Murcia, M., & Hilles, S. (1988). *Techniques and resources in teaching grammar*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, P., & Rinvolucri, M. (1995). *More grammar games*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
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- Ur, P. (2009). *Grammar practice activities: A practical guide for teachers* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

For more information on the sociopolitical aspects of dialect use and how social power relationships motivate choices of linguistic form, see:

- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. London, England: Longman.

For a discussion of the issue of varieties of English and English language testing, refer to:

Brown, J. D. (2014). The future of World Englishes in language testing. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 11, 1, 5–26.

For a useful summary contrasting English with a number of other languages, consult:

Swan, M., & Smith, B. (Eds.). (2001). *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

To read further on English as a lingua franca, see:

Jenkins, J. (2007). *English as a lingua franca: Attitude and identity*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Seidlhofer, B. (2001). Closing a conceptual gap: The case for a description of English as a lingua franca. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11, 133–158.

Seidlhofer, B. (2011). *Understanding English as a lingua franca*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

For contrasts between British and North American English, see:

Algeo, J. (2006). *British or American English? A handbook of word and grammar patterns*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Rohdenburg, G., & Schluter, J. (Eds.). (2009). *One language, two grammars? Differences between British and American English*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

For a discussion of prescriptive and descriptive grammars, see:

Curzan, A. (2009). Says who? Teaching and questioning the rules of grammar. *PMLA*, 124(3), 870–879.

Endnotes

1. For those who would like to know more about these various grammars, we have listed some references at the end of this chapter.
2. Although to us, of course, it is an oversimplification to talk about focusing on form without also examining the meaningfulness and appropriate use of the form. Then, too, we prefer to think not of research as dictating pedagogy, but rather to see its contribution as challenging teachers to think differently, to experiment with new practices, and to help teachers make the tacit explicit by cultivating new ways of talking about their practice (Larsen-Freeman, in press).
3. For the same reason, we have tried to minimize using the term “error.” Indeed, based on the form alone, it is impossible to distinguish a linguistic innovation from an error (Larsen-Freeman, 2011; Mukherjee & Hundt, 2011). In addition, as Jenkins (2000) argues, from an English as a lingua franca perspective, “There really is no justification for doggedly persisting in referring to an item as ‘an error’ if the vast majority of the world’s L2 English speakers produce and understand it” (p. 160).
4. Crystal (2001) characterizes spoken language as time-bound, spontaneous, face to face, loosely constructed, socially interactive, immediately revisable, and prosodically rich; in contrast, written language is space-bound, contrived, visually decontextualized, elaborately structured, factually communicative, repeatedly revisable, and graphically rich (pp. 42–43). Schumann (2007) also writes about the contrasts between spoken and written language, and Tarone, Bigelow, and Hansen (2009) warn that “our own literacy may bias our perception” (p.31).
5. For the references on teaching, we each draw from grammar textbook series which we have worked on or with which we are familiar.

Grammatical Terminology

CHAPTER

2

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce you to some grammatical terminology. For many of you, the terms will be familiar, and you may wish only to skim this chapter. For some of you, this chapter provides an initial exposure to some common terminology, and you may need time in order to become familiar with the new terms. Learning the vocabulary of any new language takes time. Be patient. These new terms will become more meaningful as you encounter them in context throughout the book as you explore the grammatical constructions of English.

Some ESL/EFL teachers choose not to use grammatical terminology with their students, feeling that it presents an additional learning burden. Other teachers find that by using the terminology, they can call their students' attention to certain aspects of English grammar more efficiently; thus, they conclude that students' time spent learning the terms is a worthwhile investment. Then, too, some teachers find that their students are more fluent in the terms than they are! As we stated in the previous chapter, we do not want to give the impression that knowing the terms is the same as knowing the grammar. Nevertheless, for teachers, knowing the terms can be helpful in several respects.

First, the terms provide a metalanguage, a way of talking about grammar, that helps in the conceptualization of grammar. Use of the terms also serves a referential function, providing a means to identify these concepts when referring to them subsequently. Finally, by learning the terms, teachers will have better access to the many linguistic resources available to them apart from this textbook.

In the previous chapter, we discussed the three levels of grammar that we are addressing in this book: subsentential (word or phrase level), sentential, and suprasentential (or textual) levels. We use this ternary hierarchy in introducing the terminology in this chapter.

Subsentential Terminology: Words and Phrases

CLASSIFYING WORDS: SEMANTIC, STRUCTURAL, AND FUNCTIONAL CRITERIA

It may surprise some readers to learn that even classifying words by their part of speech is an enterprise fraught with difficulty. Consider, for example, the standard definition of a noun with which many of you are familiar: "A noun is the name of a person, place, or thing."

This definition works to classify *Kevin*, *Cincinnati*, and *computer* as nouns, but it becomes problematic when we think about a word such as *blue*. Those of you conversant with part-of-speech terms may immediately identify *blue* as an adjective since it is a descriptive word. But one could argue that *blue* is the name of a “thing”—a color—and is, therefore, rightfully a noun. The structural or descriptive grammarians, eschewing such traditional *semantic*, or meaning-based, classifications of words as the one just given, chose instead to classify words through their *structural*, or formal, characteristics: their position in a sentence, adjacent function words, if any, and their constituents. For instance, common nouns in English typically occupy positions such as the following and are preceded by function words such as *the* or *their*:

The _____ was very amusing.

Did you notice their _____?

As for the constituents of nouns, a simple noun like *book* is a minimal unit; there is no way to break it down further. As such, we say that it has one morpheme. A *morpheme* is the smallest meaningful linguistic unit. It can be a word or a word constituent. A noun like *books*, then, has two morphemes, *book* and the *inflectional morpheme -s*, which shows that more than one book is intended.

There are two grammatical morphemes that can be used to mark nouns in English. Countable nouns have plural inflections to distinguish between “one” and “more than one” (*book* vs. *books*), and all nouns can have possessive inflections (*girl's*) to signal possession or a number of other meanings (see Chapter 16). Of course, nouns can mark both plurality and possession, e.g., *girls'*. In addition to plural and possessive inflectional morphemes, English nouns often have *derivational morphemes* that mark nouns derived from other parts of speech (see Chapter 3). For example, adding *-ness* to the adjective *sad* gives us the noun *sadness*. There are several dozen noun derivational morphemes, although some are used only in a few words, such as *-dom* as in *kingdom* and *wisdom* (Roberts, 1958), whereas others like *-ness* are frequent and productive.

However, relying on structural criteria for classifying words can create problems. Not all nouns have distinctive noun-like morphemes, and even when they do, the nouns may have different functions; for example, *wilderness* is a noun that functions as a modifier in the compound *wilderness park*. Furthermore, many of the words without distinctive morphology appear to belong to more than one part of speech, such as *fly* as a noun or a verb and *orange* as a noun or an adjective.

Due to the inadequacy of classifying words according to parts of speech based upon semantic and structural criteria, a third criterion is sometimes employed. Known as a *functional* criterion, it classifies a word by the grammatical function that it has in a sentence. For example, from a functional perspective, a noun is a part of speech that can serve as a subject of a verb in a sentence. Thus, in the following sentence, we know in part that the word *glass* is a noun because it is the subject of the verb *is*:

The glass is dirty.

The problem here is that a noun such as *glass* can also precede another noun and modify it much as an adjective would without changing its form (cf. its adjective form, *glassy*), as in

The glass jar is dirty.

As can be seen, then, none of these attempts to classify a word as a noun are complete by themselves. They all direct attention to different characteristics of nouns: their common meaning, their form/position, and their grammatical function. It is therefore better to think of a particular part of speech as being determined by a cluster of criteria. Most linguists now acknowledge that it is not simple to define even these elemental building blocks of grammar, the parts of speech. Culicover (1999), for instance, demonstrates that many of the

part-of-speech classes are not really classes at all, but merely loose collections of individual lexical items, each of which has its own behavioral profile. The items in these collections are all covered by the same term, by tradition and convenience only (Tomasello, 2003, p.173).

A further complication for ESL/EFL students is that sometimes there are cross-linguistic differences in parts of speech; for example, the English adjective *tall* has a noun equivalent in many West African languages. Some linguists would even say that classifying a word as a noun or a verb is impossible apart from the discourse in which it occurs (Hopper & Thompson, 1984). Teachers should take heart from the observation, though, that most learners have no difficulty identifying parts of speech inductively when they have become familiar with a variety of typical examples. Ironically, it is not the recognition of a word's part of speech that appears to be problematic—it is the definition of the parts of speech that is elusive. In order to be as thorough as possible, we use all three criteria in defining the following parts of speech.

PARTS OF SPEECH: MAJOR AND MINOR WORD CLASSES

The parts of speech are usually grouped into two categories: the major and minor word classes. The major word classes—nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs—are termed “major” because they carry most of the content or meaning of a sentence. Such classes are also “open” in that new words are added as they are coined. The other category, the minor word classes, plays a more structural role in a sentence and each of its classes is more “closed,” in that normally no new words are added. Classes in this category include, but are not limited to, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, pronouns, determiners, and conjunctions. These words are sometimes also called “structure” words or “function” words, or even “functors.” To contrast the two categories, notice the difference between the following two sentences:

With the function words (content words deleted):

The _____ for _____ the _____ in the _____.

With the content words (function words deleted):

_____ broom _____ sweeping _____ floor belongs _____ closet.

Clearly, the central message can be grasped better when the content words are left in than when only the function words remain.

However, it is prudent to be cautious here too. As you saw just a moment ago, grammatical definitions are often not so airtight as they first seem. This observation holds here, too, in the division between major and minor word classes. To start with, the minor word classes do convey some meaning. Furthermore, not all the major word classes are truly open. Only certain adverbs can be added to the adverb class (namely, the “manner” adverbs, which usually end in *-ly*); however, other types of adverbs are usually closed to new members. Then, too, as you have already observed, many words appear to belong to more than one category. A word like *few*, for instance, may function as a determiner (*There were few objections*) or a pronoun (*There were few*), both minor word classes. In spite of these concessions, we will retain the conventional division here and describe the major word classes first, followed by the minor ones.

Nouns

As we have already treated nouns when illustrating the three criteria for defining parts of speech, much of what follows will either recapitulate or expand upon the earlier discussion. The notional, or semantic, definition of a noun is as you have seen—a *noun* is the name of a person, place, or thing. Some linguists add “or idea” to account for abstract nouns such as *democracy*, *environment*, and *life*.

As we also noted earlier, nouns have endings or derivational morphemes that formally indicate that a word is a noun; recall the *-ness* of *sadness*. They also have grammatical morphemes, or inflections, for plural and possessive. In terms of their position, they are frequently preceded by determiners, such as articles (e.g., *the*).

As pointed out earlier, nouns serve functionally as subjects of verbs. However, they can also be direct objects of verbs: **He watered his lawn.**

subject predicates: **We are all learners.**

object predicates: **They elected Ann president.**

indirect objects of verbs: **Ann gave the people confidence.**

appositives: **Albany, capital of New York, is located on the Hudson River.**

objects of prepositions: **Troy is also located on the Hudson River.**

vocatives: **Let me tell you, my friend, grammar is just plain fun!**

Not all these labels may be familiar, but your intuitions alone should be enough to convince you of the multiple functions that nouns fulfill.

Another fact worth knowing about nouns is that there are three types. By far, the most frequent in occurrence are *common* nouns, or nouns referring to a kind of person, thing, or idea. Common nouns themselves are divisible into two subcategories: *count* nouns, which take the plural inflection (e.g., *farmers*), and *mass*, or *noncount*, nouns, which don't (e.g., *air*).² In contrast to common nouns are *proper* nouns, or names for unique individuals or places (e.g., *Kevin*; *Cincinnati*). Proper nouns can be singular or plural (*Kevin Smith* vs. *the Smiths*). A small number of nouns that refer to groups are called *collective* nouns. Collective nouns differ from other nouns in readily being able to take either singular or plural verb forms, depending on the interpretation given to the noun—that is, whether it is seen as a unit (*The family is together again*) or as a collection of individuals (*The family are all coming for the weekend*).

To conclude this section on nouns, we should note that grammatical gender is not an important feature of Modern English grammar, although it was in Old English and certainly is in many other languages of the world. Grammatical gender in English does still exist in certain pairs of nouns, such as *actor/actress* and *host/hostess*, but most often these days, the masculine noun is used to refer to both males and females, or neither is used, in favor of a gender-neutral form, such as using *server* instead of *waiter/waitress*. Grammatical gender is still present in pronouns, with the contrast between subject pronouns *he* and *she*, object pronouns *him* and *her*, reflexive pronouns *himself* and *herself*, and the possessive determiners and pronouns forms *his* and *her/hers*. At one point in time, feminine pronouns, e.g., *she*, were used with certain nouns, such as countries and ships, but such usage is discouraged in style manuals today.

Verbs

The notional, or semantic, definition of a verb is that it is a word that denotes an action or state of being. Verb morphology in English is richer than noun morphology. Four grammatical morphemes can be used with English verbs:

1. *-s* of third person singular present tense verbs: **Sue jogs every day.**
2. *-ed* of past tense verbs: **She jogged yesterday.**
3. *-en* of the past participle: **He has seen the movie three times already.**
4. *-ing* of the present participle: **I am teaching three courses this term.**

In terms of their position, verbs follow nouns that function as subjects and may be followed in turn by adjectives, adverbs, or other nouns, as depicted in the following sentences:

The authorities { seemed **cautious.**
planned **carefully.**
adopted **the plan.**

Functionally, adding a verb to a noun is enough to complete a sentence:

Pauline snores.

We can categorize verbs by what follows them syntactically, adding more detail in the chapters that follow.

intransitive verbs, which take no following object: **Mavis slept until noon.**

transitive verbs, which require an object: **Doug raises llamas.**

ditransitive verbs, which take two objects (indirect and direct): **I handed Flo the package.**

linking verbs, where what follows the verb relates back to the subject: **We are teachers.**

complex transitive verbs, where what follows the object relates to the object: **They considered the project a waste of time.**

prepositional verbs, which require a prepositional phrase to be complete: **Steve glanced at the headlines.**

Two qualities that verbs have are tense and aspect. We devote an entire chapter to discussing these characteristics of verbs; therefore, at this point, let us simply note that *tense* traditionally refers to the time of an event's occurrence (hence the present, past, or future tenses), while a typical *aspect* distinction denotes whether or not the event has occurred earlier (perfect aspect) or is still in progress (progressive aspect). To illustrate aspect, compare the following two sentences, where the *have* verb + the past participle of the first sentence signals that the action is complete and the *be* verb + the present participle of the second sentence shows the action is in progress, i.e., incomplete:

John *has written* his term paper.

Now he *is studying* for his final exams.

To conclude our discussion of verbs, we should point out that verbs, too, are marked for number, but only with subjects in the third person singular in the present tense or with the verb *be*. In such instances, subject-verb agreement occurs, and the verb is marked to agree with the singular or plural subject noun. For example:

present tense, subject in third person singular

Josh *loves* chocolate.

She *mows* the lawn on Saturdays.

be verb, all subjects, present and past tense

I *am* surprised that you said that.

Jack *is* making the punch.

We *are* baking brownies.

Lloyd *was* absent.

They *were* frightened by the storm.

We investigate subject-verb agreement in more detail in Chapter 4.

Adjectives

The semantic definition of an adjective is that it describes or denotes the qualities of someone or something. Adjectives commonly occur between a determiner and a noun, or after *be* or other linking verbs, although they can also follow a noun (e.g., *She made her brother happy.*). Adjectives have no typical form, but certain derivational morphemes are associated with adjectives, such as *-able* (likeable), *-ish* (childish), *-ful* (thoughtful) and *-y* (lazy) (Chalker, 1984).

English adjectives do not agree in number or gender with nouns they modify as they do in some other languages; however, certain of them have inflectional morphemes for comparative and superlative forms such as *happy, happier, happiest*.

The function of adjectives is to modify nouns. There are two adjective types: *attributive*, which precede nouns, and *predicative*, which follow linking verbs:

attributive: **The old bucket sprang a leak.**

predicative: **He became angry at the very thought.**

The semantic contrast between attributive and predicative adjectives is discussed in Chapter 20.

Adverbs

Adverbs modify verbs and contribute meanings of various sorts to sentences. Particularly common are adverbs of direction, location, manner, time, and frequency:

direction: **Jim pointed there.**

location: **Isabel shops nearby.**

manner: **The choir sang joyfully at the ordination.**

time: **Soon Rachel will retire.**

frequency: **We visit our friends in Detroit sometimes.**

As you can see, adverbs are quite flexible in terms of their location. They can occur in a sentence finally, medially, and initially. *Manner* adverbs are the only ones with distinctive form; they usually take the *-ly* ending.

The primary function of adverbs is to modify verbs, as in the previous examples, but they may also modify a whole sentence, as in the following:

Fortunately, they arrived home before too much damage had been done.

Grammars also distinguish adverbs of *degree*, which modify adjectives and other adverbs:

It is too early to plant a garden.

Ben was barely late to school.

Finally, we should note that there are multiword units that can occupy the same position in a sentence as single-word adverbs and can convey the same meaning. For example:

direction: **Jim pointed at the constellation Pisces.**

location: **Isabel shops at the mall.**

manner: **The choir sang with joy at the ordination.**

time: **Next year, Rachel will retire.**

frequency: **We visit our friends in Detroit every once in a while.**

The above discussion of adverbs concludes our survey of the major parts of speech. What follows is a more abbreviated introduction to some of the members of the minor word classes.

Pronouns

Pronouns refer to or replace nouns and noun phrases within a text (e.g., “*my aunt, she . . .*”) or as direct reference to an outside situation (e.g., In response to sudden loud noise, I can say, “*What was that?*”). They occupy the same position as a noun or noun phrase does. There are many different kinds of pronouns: subject (*I, you, he, she, it, we, they*), object (*me, you, him, her, it, us, them*), reflexive (*myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, themselves*), possessive (*mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs*), demonstrative (*this, that, these, those*), and others. The forms within each category are distinguished by number (singular, plural), person (first, second, and third), gender, and in the case of the demonstratives, by number and proximity. (See Chapter 16 for a fuller discussion.)

Determiners

Older grammars make no special reference to determiners, incorporating them into the adjective word class. We will use the term *determiner* to refer to that special class of words that limit the nouns that follow them. Various types of words fit into this category: articles [*the, a(n)*], demonstratives (*this, that, these, those*), and possessive determiners (*my, your, his, her, its, our, their*), to cite the major ones.³ They precede an adjective if one is present; otherwise, they are positioned directly in front of a noun:

I put my backpack on the front porch, and now I can't find it.

Prepositions

Prepositions connect words to other parts of a sentence and have a close relationship with the word that follows, which is usually a noun. Together, a preposition and noun comprise a *prepositional phrase*. Prepositions are usually one word (*in, to, at*), but they sometimes can be two or three (*out of, on top of*). Prepositions prototypically signal spatial and temporal relationships:

spatial: **Ying works at a downtown office.**

temporal: **Sometimes, she doesn't leave until late.**

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that join. There are *coordinating conjunctions*, such as *and, but, and or*, which join “like” constituents (see Chapter 24). For example:

Marianne and Diane wrote this book.

Marianne lives in California, but Diane lives in Michigan or Vermont.

And there are subordinating conjunctions, which we call *adverb subordinators*, such as *because* and *although*, which join a subordinate or dependent clause to an independent one:

It was hard to write a book together because they live so far apart.

Although Marianne and Diane live far apart, they are still friends.

There are also conjunctive or linking adverbs, which connect two independent clauses:

Stu has retired; however, he still keeps busy professionally.

A PHRASE

We realize that we haven't defined *clause* as yet, but we will do so shortly. However, before doing so, we should briefly deal with one other grammatical concept at the subsentential level, namely *phrase*. A phrase is a group of two or more words that function together. For example, if you were asked to divide the following sentence into phrases, using slash marks, you would probably not do so as follows:

The impatient/customer was acting very/cranky at the/time.

Our grammatical intuitions tell us that these words grouped this way don't work together. Conversely, the following division is much more satisfying:

The impatient customer/was acting very cranky/at the time.

—or—

The impatient customer/was acting/very cranky/at the time.

In the last two versions of these sentences, the words between slash marks somehow cluster together better. We have divided the first of these alternatives into three phrases and the second into four phrases. We will discuss the different analyses in Chapter 6. For now, the point is that you intuitively understand what a phrase is.

Sentential Terminology

A CLAUSE

Any construction containing a subject and a verb is a *clause*. Clauses that stand independently as sentences are called *independent* or *main* clauses; clauses that cannot are called *dependent* or *subordinate*, clauses. The latter are typically preceded by an adverb subordinator or some other grammatical marker. Thus, in the sentence, “*Although they live far apart, they are still friends,*” the first clause is a subordinate, or dependent, clause, and the second is the main, or independent, clause.

Simple, Compound, and Complex Sentences

A *simple sentence* contains at least one subject and one verb and can stand alone as an independent clause. Notice that in the previous example, “*they are still friends,*” could stand alone as a complete sentence, whereas the first clause, “*although they live far apart,*” would be a sentence fragment.

There are seven basic simple sentence patterns in English:

subject + verb: **The building collapsed.**

subject + verb + object: **They bought a new car.**

subject + verb + prepositional phrase: **Aziz went to the store.**

subject + verb + object + prepositional phrase: **We put the books on the desk.**

subject + verb + indirect object + direct object: **She wrote him a letter.**

subject + verb + subject predicate: **Janet’s my friend.**

subject + verb + object + object predicate: **She makes me happy.**

In contrast to a simple sentence, a *compound sentence* consists of two or more clauses of equal grammatical importance. As we saw earlier, a coordinating conjunction connects the two clauses:

He went to the party, but I stayed home.

One type of *complex sentence* contains a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses. We have just considered one example describing Marianne and Diane. Here is another:

Peggy frequently calls because she wants to stay in touch.

In this sentence, the main clause, “*Peggy frequently calls,*” is followed by a subordinate clause, “*because she wants to stay in touch.*” As you can see in these examples, subordinate clauses are often, although not always, introduced by an adverb subordinator.

In the second type of complex sentence, a dependent clause is embedded, or included, in an independent clause. Embedded clauses can take the place of a subject:

That he didn’t want to go to the ballet was obvious. (*It was obvious.*)

or an object:

I argued that it would be a mistake. (*I argued my position.*)

or even of an adjective:

The person who was responsible for the accident fled. (*The person responsible fled.*)

Thus, when we move beyond the simple or monoclausal sentence, three processes are at work: *coordination*, or the joining of two clauses of equal grammatical stature; *subordination* of one clause to another; and *embedding*, when a dependent clause is included within a main or independent clause.

SENTENCE MOODS

English sentences are said to display three main moods—*declarative* (sometimes called *indicative*), *interrogative*, and *imperative*—and two minor moods: *exclamatory* and *subjunctive*. As its name suggests, *mood* conveys the speaker's attitude toward the factual content of the sentence. For instance, the subjunctive mood can indicate a speaker's uncertainty or the hypotheticality of the propositional content, or meaning of the clause. In the following sentence, the subjunctive mood is signaled by the use of the base form of the *be* verb, rather than the inflected form *is*:

If that be so, I'll leave now.

It can also indicate that something is contrary to fact, or counterfactual, here signaled by the use of the *be* verb in its third person plural past tense form:

If I were a bird, I wouldn't eat worms.

Four of the five moods have sentence type counterparts (see below), but the subjunctive in English can be marked only by using a different form of the verb from the form ordinarily called for. Usually, the subjunctive uses either the uninflected base form or *were*.

declarative (statement sentence type): **Today is Tuesday.**

interrogative (question sentence type): **What are you going to wear to the party?**

imperative (command sentence type): **Pass the milk, please.**

exclamatory (exclamation sentence type): **What a beautiful autumn it is!**

subjunctive (here realized with the *were* form): **I wish I were going with you.**

It has been said that the three main options in the English mood system correspond to the three main communicative functions of language: telling someone something, asking someone something, and getting someone to do something (Allen & Widdowson, 1975, p. 75). We should not lose sight of the fact, however, that a sentence type does not necessarily match its function. It is possible to ask someone to do something using any of the following three types, even though the first is a more indirect way than the other two.

statement: **I am thirsty.**

question: **Could you bring me something to drink?**

command: **Please bring me something to drink.**

It should be mentioned that the three main sentence types have negative forms as well:

negative statement: **I am not thirsty.**

negative question: **Couldn't you bring me something to drink?**

negative command: **Don't bring me anything to drink.**

It is interesting to see that among these, the negative question, at least, is still capable of accomplishing the same function as its affirmative counterpart. As we will see later in the book, context and expectation will determine when affirmative and negative *yes/no* questions are used in English.

THEME/RHEME

English has a fairly fixed word order compared with many other languages; still, some variation is possible. For example:

- a. **The Cub Scouts held the car wash despite the rain.**
- b. **The car wash was held by the Cub Scouts despite the rain.**
- c. **Despite the rain, the Cub Scouts held the car wash.**

The question that should come to mind is this: What is the difference among these three word orders? The sentences appear to have the same propositional content, or core meaning, so what purpose does word order variation serve?

A helpful concept to draw on in answering this question is the distinction that systemic functional linguistics, following the Prague School of Linguistics, makes between *theme* and *rheme*. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the theme provides the “point of departure of the message” (p.83). In (a), it is the Cub Scouts; in (b), the car wash; and in (c), the rain. In other words, the theme provides the framework for interpreting what follows. What follows is the rheme, the remainder of the message in the clause.

English, then, typically uses word order to assign the roles of theme and rheme. Since English is a grammatical subject-predicate language—that is, every English sentence is composed of two major constituents, a *subject* and a *predicate*—it is commonly the case that the subject in English will be the theme and the predicate the rheme, as in (a) and (b) (we explain (c) later):

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| The Cub Scouts | held the car wash despite the rain. |
| The car wash | was held by the Cub Scouts despite the rain. |
| subject (here the theme) | predicate (here the rheme) |

Other languages use different means for making the theme-rheme distinction. For example, Japanese and Tagalog mark the theme with special particles. In Chinese, referred to as a *topic-comment language* (see Chapter 5), the topic establishes what the clause is concerned with,⁴ but it does not necessarily correspond to a grammatical subject:⁵

My back, it hurts.
topic comment

Since English does not strictly forbid such word orders, in speech at any rate, and since English even has other topic-like ways of establishing the theme (e.g., *As for fundraising, I prefer bake sales to car washes*), Chinese, Tagalog, and Japanese speakers will need a great deal of practice with subject-predicate sequences in order to avoid overusing topic-comment structures in English (Lock, 1996).

MARKEDNESS

As we have just seen, English too, can thematize something other than the subject. Such is the case with (c) above, where the adverbial prepositional phrase *despite the rain* is the theme. Linguists use the term *marked* to refer not only to such instances of thematization of nonsubjects, but also to refer to any exceptions from what is very typical, very predictable. It is perhaps better to think of markedness as a continuum from structures that are unmarked, meaning that they are typical, to highly marked structures, meaning that they are exceptional.

VOICE

We have not yet accounted for the difference between sentences (a) and (b) above. Both sentences have subjects that are themes; both have the same propositional content or core meaning. The difference between the two lies in their *voice*. Sentence (a) is in the active voice; sentence (b) is in the passive voice. Voice is another linguistic device that languages employ to allow for different constituents to function as themes. In the active voice, the subject

functions as the theme and is most often the actor or agent of some action, as *the Cub Scouts* in our example. In the passive voice, the thing acted upon by the agent—*the car wash*—has been made the theme. There are other differences between (a) and (b) as well, and these are dealt with in detail in Chapter 18 on the passive voice. For our purposes here, it will suffice to say that the selection of the passive over the active allows the speaker or writer to thematize noun phrases other than agents.

Suprasentential Terminology

So far, we have been discussing terms that are useful for describing subsentence and sentence-level phenomena. We turn now to introducing terminology that applies to the suprasentential, or textual or discourse, level of language.

BACKGROUNDING AND FOREGROUNDING

It has been observed that in a narrative, certain sentences provide *background* information, while others function in the *foreground* to carry the main storyline. What often distinguishes one from the other are their verb tenses. For instance, in the following narrative, the past tense is used for the foregrounded information, the present tense for the background:

Yesterday I went to the market. It has lots of fruit that I like. I bought several different kinds of apples. I also found that plums were in season, so I bought two pounds of them. . .

In this example, the foregrounded past narrative is interrupted by the second sentence with a present tense verb. This sentence provides information (here a statement about the market) that is general background information to the story.

COHESION

Another quality of English grammar at the suprasentential level that we might illustrate with this simple narrative is the fact that *texts*, units of spoken or written language at the suprasentential level, have an organizational structure of their own. It is not possible to put the second sentence first in the above narrative and have it mean anything, for example. For the most part, we can no more move sentences around in a paragraph (unless we alter them in some way) than we can move words around in a sentence without making some other modifications.

Five linguistic mechanisms that Halliday and Hasan (1976) point to in order for texts to have *cohesion* or structure at the level of text are the following:

reference: **The boy wanted a new bike. One day, he . . .** (*he* refers back to the boy)

ellipsis: **A: Who wrote the letter?**

B: Marty. (The response *Marty* elliptically signals that Marty wrote the letter.)

substitution: **I plan to enter college next year. If I do, . . .** (*do* substitutes for *enter college*)

conjunction: **Peter needed some money. He, therefore, decided to get a job.** (*therefore* makes explicit the causal relationship between the first and second sentences)

lexical cohesion: (here through synonymy): **He was grateful for the money he had been given. He slipped the coins into his pocket and hurried down the street.**
(The word *coins* refers back to *money*.)

REGISTER

Another concept that applies at the suprasentential level is *register*. We used the word *register* earlier in this book to mean the level of formality of language. While this is true enough, it is something of a simplification. According to systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), register actually involves three variables: field, tenor, and mode. *Field* refers to the social activity in which the language is being used and what is being talked about. Field is reflected in choices of content words. *Tenor* is concerned with the roles and relationships of interlocutors. For example, one's choice of sentence type to express a request—declarative, interrogative, imperative—would be conditioned by the nature of the relationship between the person making the request and the person being asked to fulfill it. The *mode* refers to the channel of communication, whether the language is written or spoken and, with regard to the latter, whether it is face to face or more remote. Cohesive ties in a text, among other things, will be affected by mode.

GENRE

A closely aligned linguistic concept to register is *genre*. Genre, too, refers to linguistic variation. Rather than variation due to level of formality, however, the variation is due to the communicative purposes to which the language is put. For example, the language used in a scientific research paper is different from that in a recipe or a letter of recommendation. They differ in their patterns of words, structures, and voice. For instance, in the interest of leaving no room for ambiguity, a legal document is often characterized by “very long sentences containing numerous and elaborate qualifications (all those elements beginning *notwithstanding, in accordance with, without prejudice to, etc.*)” (Swales, 1990, p. 63).

Teachers whose job it is to teach English for special or academic purposes know full well the challenge of teaching students the necessary patterned structures of a particular genre. Then, too, teachers of English language learners in elementary and secondary schools have to teach their students how to understand and construct academic language genres. In order for such learners to succeed in school, they must move beyond using conversational language or Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) to academic language, CALP or Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (Cummins, 1999). They have to learn how science texts are structured, how history texts are structured, etc. (Schleppegrell, 2004). It might even be said that professional training (including becoming ESL/EFL teachers) involves learning to speak and write a particular genre so that one can join a particular discourse community as a participating member.

GIVEN/NEW

We conclude this discussion of suprasentential features by revisiting the theme-rheme distinction, which was introduced earlier. While theme-rheme has to do with the structure of clauses, there is a close relationship between this pair and the way information is structured through sentences in a text. A principle of information structuring, which we alluded to in Chapter 1, is to introduce new information first in the rheme of one clause and then to treat it as given information in the theme or themes of a subsequent clause(s). *Given* information is that which is assumed by the writer to be known by the reader. This assumption is made either because the given information has been previously mentioned or because it is in some way shared between the writer and reader. *New* information, on the other hand, is

“newsworthy”—not something the writer can take for granted that the reader knows. This principle explains why our example in the previous chapter, **I looked up it in the dictionary*, is ungrammatical. The pronoun, *it*, refers to something that is already known. It therefore does not ordinarily occur in the rheme if there is another place for it to go. We return to this point in Chapter 22.

For now, consider the first five sentences that begin the previous paragraph. The words *theme-rheme distinction* occur in the rheme of the first sentence. They are echoed in the theme of the second sentence. In the rheme of the second sentence, the notion of *information structuring* is introduced and mentioned again in the theme of the third sentence. In the rheme of the third sentence, the concept of given information is introduced. Given information is treated in the theme of the fourth sentence. In the rheme of the fourth sentence, the words *which is assumed by the writer* occur. The theme of the fifth sentence picks up on this rheme by referring to *this assumption*. In this way, the information flows from rheme to theme, from sentence to sentence, from new to given.

The tendency to place new information toward the end of a clause is called *end focus*. End focus occurs in spoken discourse as well, although speakers have other means at their disposal in speech for identifying new information. Information units in the spoken language are defined by the tone group. Each tone group has a syllable made prominent by pitch movement:

I went to the movies with LUcy.

One syllable in each tone group, the tonic syllable, functions to focus the attention of the listener. While the focus is typically at the end, it need not be:

I went to the MOVies with Lucy.

However, when the prominent syllable is in nonfinal position, one typically interprets the stress as contrastive; that is,

I went to the MOVies with Lucy. (not to the concert)

But while given/new and theme/rheme are related, they arise from a different perspective. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) put it this way:

The Theme is what I, the speaker, choose to take as my point of departure. The Given is what you, the listener, already know about or have accessible to you. Theme + Rheme is speaker-oriented, while Given + New is listener-oriented.

But both are, of course, speaker-selected. It is the speaker who assigns both structures, mapping one on to the other to give a complete texture to the discourse and thereby relate it to its environment. (p.120)

The speaker’s (writer’s) choices are thus predicated on what has gone before and what is to come. In this way, the structure of a single sentence both contributes to and depends on the physical context in which it occurs and the discourse or text around it. As you will see throughout this book, discourse and grammar have this symbiotic relationship in that grammar is a resource for creating discourse, while the discourse context shapes grammar to accomplish very specific communicative goals.

Conclusion

This chapter introduces the terms that you will find in this book. Don’t worry if you are not clear on all of them. Throughout the book, we revisit what has been introduced here and provide you with opportunities to reinforce the understanding that you have acquired thus far.

Exercises

Test your knowledge of what has been introduced.

1. Write an original sentence or short text that illustrates each of the following concepts. Underline and label the following pertinent word(s) in your sentence.

- | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|----------------------|------------------|
| a. noun | e. pronoun | i. phrase/clause | m. subordination |
| b. verb | f. determiner | j. subject/predicate | n. genre |
| c. adjective | g. preposition | k. simple sentence | o. register |
| d. adverb | h. conjunction | l. coordination | p. given-new |

2. Identify the part of speech (noun, verb, determiner, etc.) of each word in the following sentences. Use semantic, structural, and functional criteria as necessary.

- John and Paul were fighting.
- John gave Paul a black eye.
- The principal sent them to his office immediately.

3. List the three major moods in English and write a sentence that corresponds to each type.

4. Illustrate the fact that a pragmatic function, such as a request, doesn't always correspond to a particular sentence type.

5. Give an original example for each of the five ways that Halliday and Hasan (1976) give to describe cohesion in discourse.

6. It is said that the theme is less important than the rheme in terms of its information-bearing status. Explain why this is so.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

7. Rearrange the sentences in the following short text so that it makes sense. In addition to rearranging the sentences, what other types of changes do you need to make?

There are only two ways to get to Culebra. One is to fly from San Juan. The other is to take a ferry from Fajardo. Unless, of course, you know someone with a boat. If you do, it will be easy.

8. Choose one of the following genres: a newscast, a web-based news source, or an advertisement in a newspaper or on the radio or television. Can you identify any special grammatical features of the genre you have chosen?

9. Discuss the following in terms of their themes:

- Out of nowhere came a giant blue heron.
- I was given a gold pen by my parents at graduation.
- Concerning homework, I don't believe in it.

10. It is said that language acquirers, whether acquiring their native language (Gruber, 1967) or their second language (Givón, 1979), go through an initial stage in which all of their utterances are of a topic-comment structure. This has been reported to be true

regardless of the type of native or target language. Collect some beginning learner speech data and see if you find this to be the case as well. Consult Fuller and Gundel (1987) for some more background.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For general references on English grammar, consult:

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For more information on topicalization, see:

- Haegeman, L. (2006). *Thinking syntactically: A guide to argumentation and analysis*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
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Endnotes

1. In traditional terms, these have been called *subject complements*, and for the next function, *object complements*. However, we refer to them as *subject and object predicates*, reserving the term *complement* for embedded clauses of various types (see Chapter 31, on complementation).
2. Actually, nouns have more flexibility in number than this traditional distinction reveals (Reid, 1991). See Chapter 4 for further discussion.
3. Here, we deal with one type of determiner, core determiners. Other types are introduced in Chapter 16.
4. Although similar, theme and topic are somewhat different concepts (see Fries, 1996).
5. Some languages, such as Japanese and Korean, readily use both options—subject/predicate and topic/comment.

Introduction

In this chapter, we briefly treat the lexicogrammar of English. Traditionally, the lexicon has been characterized as a mental inventory of words and productive word derivational processes. We take a broader view of the lexicon; we consider it to comprise not only single words, but also word compounds and conventionalized multiword phrases. Furthermore, from a pedagogical perspective, vocabulary and grammar have usually been viewed as two different areas of language. As we mentioned in Chapter 1, however, we believe that it is better to conceive of grammar and lexicon as intertwined, and for this reason, in keeping with Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), we prefer to think in terms of *lexicogrammar*.

There are three reasons for our preference. First is the interlingual argument: that which is accomplished lexically in one language can be realized grammatically in another. For example, Indonesian can convey the meaning “more than one” with reduplication. It can use two nouns in a row: *buku buku* means more than one book. In English, this same meaning is conveyed with an inflectional morpheme *-s* for the plural. Over time, a shift from lexis (words) to grammar can happen within a language as well. The process is called *grammaticalization*, when words coalesce and become a grammatical construction. An example of this is *be going to*, which transformed from a three-word lexical unit with a verb of forward motion (*go*) to a grammatical unit, signalling future time, partly fusing in speech to “gonna” (Bybee, 2006).

Second, we note that many multiword lexical units conform to the grammar of a language; that is, they adhere to acceptable word order. For example, the English multiword phrase is always *by the way*, not *way by the*. Recent work in computer analyses of large corpora of English texts suggests that these highly frequent recurrent sequences of words (e.g., Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010) are basic intermediate units between lexis and grammar (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992).

Third, often a false dichotomy is made between meaning and form, with the former allegedly the province of the lexicon and the latter the product of the grammar. Such a distinction is problematic because the grammar/form and lexicon/meaning dichotomy is really more of a continuum. For instance, at the grammatical end of the continuum, we could place the function words, such as the preposition *of* and the pronoun *it*. At the other end, we could assign content words, such as the noun *garden* and the verb *grow*. If we leave it at this, the distinction seems sensible. However, we soon see that the differences are really matters of degree, and intermediate examples are easy to find. For example, a preposition such as *in* would seem to have more semantic content than a noun such as *thing*. Content words

(i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) vary enormously in their concreteness of meaning and in their semantic specificity (Langacker, 1987).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO KNOW A WORD?

A question we might reasonably pose to help us understand what is entailed in lexicogrammar is this: What does it mean to know a word? We might answer as follows. To really know a word, one needs to know its

- spelling (orthography)
- phonetic representation [pronunciation, syllabification, and stress (if multisyllabic)]
- morphological irregularity (where applicable)
- syntactic features and restrictions (including part of speech)
- common derivations and collocations (i.e., words with which it co-occurs)
- semantic features and restrictions
- pragmatic features and restrictions

Consider, for example, the form of the word *child*. The knowledge of an English speaker would include its spelling, *c-h-i-l-d*, and its pronunciation, /tʃaɪld/. With respect to morphological irregularity, the speaker would need to know that the noun *child* has an irregular and idiosyncratic plural, *children*, which is not generated by the regular rules for forming plurals in English.¹ Syntactic features and restrictions would include the word's part of speech—a noun—and in particular, the fact that *child* is a common countable noun. Common derivatives include *childlike*, *childish*, and *childhood*, while common collocations include *child's play*, *child labor*, and *child psychology*.

Semantic information would include the concept *human* and also information indicating that the word is neutral regarding gender distinction. It would contrast the term *child* with similar terms for younger humans, such as *infant* and *baby*, and it would also contrast the word with parallel items denoting older humans, such as *adolescent* or *adult*.

Finally, from a pragmatic or use perspective, the speaker would be able to contrast *child* with other words with the same meaning—for example, an informal counterpart, *kid*. Notice that there is a pragmatic restriction on the latter form, however. While many speakers of English are quite comfortable using the plural version of this informal form, *kids*, they find that its singular form has a certain pejorative connotation:

It's a snow day today. My kids are home from school. (acceptable)

It's a snow day today. ?My kid is home from school. (questionable)

Many speakers of English would prefer to use *son* or *daughter* or some other word when referring to one child. We might also note that *it* is used for a young child when its sex is unknown (e.g., *What's its name?*).

Speakers of English use this information in various ways. For example, we use orthographic information when we alphabetize words, phonological information when we make words alliterate or rhyme, and syntactic information when we match determiners and nouns appropriately. Here are some examples of the latter:

this child (not *these child)

these children (not *this children)

many children (not *much children)

Semantic information is used when we accept a lexical item in certain combinations as meaningful:

The child slept for two hours.

But we reject it in others as nonsensical—at least in any literal sense:

***The child evaporated two hours ago.**

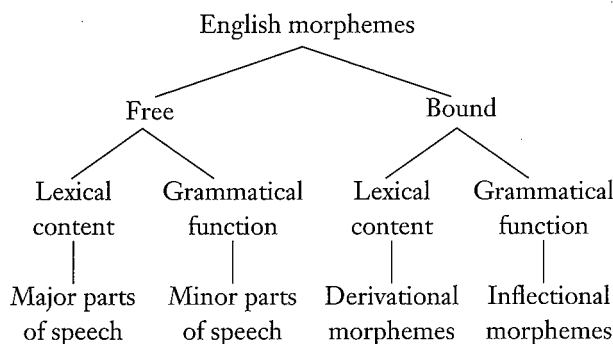
Semantic information also helps to distinguish among words with similar, but not identical, meanings. To truly know a word means to know both how it differs from and how it is similar to others. Pragmatic information is useful when we try to be sensitive to the appropriateness of the register of our lexical choices. It also helps us in the realm of usage—to identify patterns of words that collocate, or go together, in particular contexts.

In order to truly know how to use a word appropriately in English, then, a speaker or writer would need to know much more than simply the general “meaning” of the word. To make this same point more generally, for the remainder of this chapter, we consider the features of lexicogrammatical items: their form, meaning, and use.

The Form of Lexicogrammatical Items

MORPHOLOGY

We begin by discussing the morphology of words. Morphemes can be divided into two basic categories: free morphemes and morphemes that are bound or attached to other words. Each of these two major categories can be subdivided further into two types: those morphemes that have more lexical content and those that are more grammatical in function, although, as we already admitted, the line between the two is sometimes hard to draw. The free morphemes with lexical content represent the major parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. The free grammatical morphemes include the minor parts of speech: pronouns, determiners, prepositions, and conjunctions, among others.



The bound morphemes consist of two kinds of affixes: derivational, which are more lexical in nature, and inflectional, which are more grammatical in nature. When a morpheme added to a word results in either a different part of speech or the same part of speech with a different lexical meaning, it is a *derivational* morpheme. Derivational affixes can be prefixes (e.g., *unbend*) or suffixes (e.g., *argument*).

If a morpheme simply adds some element of meaning required by the grammar and changes the form of a word without changing its basic part of speech, then it is called an *inflection* or *inflectional* morpheme. An example of an inflectional morpheme would be the addition of *-ing* to the verb *watch* in *I am watching television*. *Watch* remains a verb after the *-ing* has been affixed, but the suffix adds a grammatical meaning, namely that the action is an ongoing one.

As introduced in the previous chapter, there are eight inflectional morphemes in English, all of them suffixes.

Four of them involve verbs:

present participle: **watching**

present tense—third person singular: **walks**

past tense: **jumped**

past participle: **eaten**

Two are added to nouns:

possessive: **John's**

plural: **books**

And two of them come at the end of adjectives and adverbs:

comparative: **clearer; faster**

superlative: **clearest; fastest**

The only inflections that are not suffixes involve the irregular forms, which can have internal vowel changes, no changes at all, or some completely different and historically unrelated (i.e., suppletive) form. For example:

internal vowel change: **mouse** → **mice** (plural)

ring → **rang** (past tense) → **rung** (past participle)

no change: **one deer** → **several deer** (zero plural)

hit → **hit** → **hit** (zero past tense and past participle)

suppletive form: **go** → **went**; **be** → **was** (past tense)

good → **better** (comparative) → **best** (superlative)

bad → **worse** (comparative) → **worst** (superlative)

The pronunciation of several of the regular affixes depends upon the phonological environment in which they occur. The regular suffixes for the plural, the possessive, and the third person singular of the present tense, all pattern the same way:

PRONUNCIATION OF SUFFIXES

| | <i>Plural</i> | <i>Possessive</i> | <i>Third person singular, present tense</i> |
|---|---------------|-------------------|---|
| After /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /č/, /j/, the suffix is pronounced as /əz/ | judges | Rose's | rushes |
| After all other voiced consonants and all vowel sounds, the suffix is pronounced as /z/ | dogs toys | John's Jay's | runs cries |
| After all other voiceless consonants, the suffix is pronounced as /s/ | cats | Mark's | walks |

The regular past tense and regular past participle suffixes (they take the same form) are pronounced /əd/ after /t/ and /d/ (e.g., *wanted*, *scolded*), but /d/ after all voiced sounds other than /d/ (e.g., *played*, *judged*), and /t/ after all voiceless sounds other than /t/ (e.g., *walked*, *kissed*).

SYNTACTICALLY RELEVANT LEXICAL FEATURES

Determiner-Noun Restrictions

Within noun phrases, determiner-noun restrictions are important because a few determiners co-occur only with uncountable nouns (e.g., *much* and *little*), other determiners co-occur only with singular countable nouns (e.g., *a/an*, *each*), and still others co-occur only with plural countable nouns (e.g., *these*, *many*, *few*). There are also determiners that may occur with all nouns irrespective of countability or number (e.g., *the*, *my*, *his*). However, to ensure that only grammatical sequences are produced, the countability and number restrictions of all determiners and nouns must be learned.

Verb-Noun Restrictions

The most complicated lexicogrammar restrictions in English involve verbs. First, we must distinguish between verbs that take objects (i.e., transitive verbs) and verbs that do not take objects (i.e., intransitive verbs). The lexical features (– transitive) for *disappear* and (+ transitive) for *bring* allow us to accept these sentences as grammatical:

The stain disappeared.

The man brought a gift.

and help us explain the unacceptability of sentences such as these:

***The dry cleaners disappeared the stain.**

***The man brought.**

Some verbs occur both transitively and intransitively with little or no change of meaning. These are ergative or change-of-state verbs, where the direct object in the transitive sentence is the same as the subject of the verb in the intransitive one:

John opened the door. The door opened.

Inflation increased prices. Prices increased.

These verbs would be marked (+/– transitive).

Finally, ditransitive, linking, complex transitive, and prepositional verbs (see Chapter 2) all have qualities that would have to be learned. For instance, prepositional verbs require a prepositional phrase of location, direction, or a recipient (which can be expressed either as a prepositional object or an indirect object):

location: **The child lay on the bed.** (*The child lay.)

direction: **The boy headed to work.** (*The boy headed.)

recipient: **I handed the note to John.** (*I handed the note.)

(or, I handed John the note.)

Adjective-Prepositional Phrase Restrictions

Adjectives that take objects must have a preposition before the object noun. Some adjectives are inherently transitive, which means that they must be followed by prepositions and noun objects:

Aziz is fond of sweets. (*Aziz is fond.)

Elliott is related to Larry. (*Elliott is related.)

Other adjectives are intrinsically intransitive and are not followed by an object:

Gavin is handsome.

Lucia is always happy.

However, some adjectives can be used both transitively and intransitively without a change of meaning in the adjective itself—that is, the noun object limits the scope of the adjective but does not change its meaning. For example:

Sally is nervous.

Sally is nervous about the quiz.

Co-Occurrence Restrictions Involving Prepositions

Frequently, a verb or a transitive adjective must be followed by a particular preposition (e.g., *to rely on X*, *to distinguish X from Y*, *to be cognizant of X*). Similarly, a given noun phrase must be preceded by a given preposition (e.g., *in my opinion*, *to my mind*, *from my point of view*) and sometimes followed by one, too (e.g., *in lieu of*, *with regard to*). Whenever new words are introduced to ESL/EFL students, we recommend the prepositions with which they co-occur be introduced as well. With these and other co-occurring forms, ESL/EFL students will need a great deal of practice.

Collocation

Certain types of word co-occurrences that are governed by conventional use have long been studied under the label *collocation*. As Mueller (2011) notes, second language learners' successful performance can be partially attributed to their knowledge of collocations. For example:

adjective-noun: **a tall person or building** (not a "high" one)

adverb-adjective: **statistically significant** (not "important")

verb-direct object: **ask/answer a question** (not "say"/"tell")

Some collocations are more fixed than others: binomials, such as *high and dry*, *hat and coat*, and *pick and choose*, and trinomials, such as *a king's ransom*, *a pretty penny*, and *a raw deal*. The difference between these fixed collocations and idioms has to do with the transparency of meaning. Idioms have meanings that are difficult to retrieve from the lexical items themselves (e.g., *kick the bucket* as a euphemism for *dying*), whereas words that go together in collocations still retain their lexical meaning. Collocations, therefore, should be decipherable, although it is probably better to think of them being on a cline—a continuum of idiomaticity (Fillmore, Kay, & O'Connor, 1988).

Computer-assisted corpus research has demonstrated that a great deal of text in English is composed of words in common patterns or in slight variants of these patterns (Sinclair, 1991). Francis (1996), reporting on the 320-million-word COBUILD corpus of British, American, and Australian English, claimed that researchers have identified over 700 patterns that are blends of lexical and grammatical elements. One such pattern, for example, consists of phrases with the verb *insist*:

insist (that)

insist on

insist on Verbing

insist on Noun Phrase

insist + quote

One conclusion that we can derive from this observation is simply that words don't occur randomly. Once you have chosen a word, you are limited in your choice of what comes next. The second point underscores what we have alluded to several times already. When it comes to performance, grammar and lexicon are intertwined.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) use the term *lexical collocation* in another sense. They refer to the expectation that other words will occur in a text (oral or written) once a particular word has occurred. Thus, if the word *professor* occurs in ongoing text, one might expect other words such as *lecture*, *university*, *teach*, or *publish* to occur. However, this is a much more general use of the term *lexical collocation*, and it seems to refer to related or associated vocabulary on a specific topic, rather than the syntactically constrained collocations that we have been discussing.

Lexical Phrases or Lexicalized Sentence Stems

Lexical phrases, like collocations, are groups of words that co-occur; the difference is that lexical phrases serve specific functions. For example, the phrase *by the way* serves the function of enabling the speaker to shift the topic in discourse (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992). As with collocations, some lexical phrases are more fixed than others: *at any rate* and *what on earth* are fixed; a phrase like *a(n) N [+ time] ago* is more open, allowing any noun of time (e.g., *day*, *week*) to fill the slot, the same with *N [+ time] by N [+ time]* as in *day by day*, and *moment by moment* (Taylor, 2002).

While Nattinger and DeCarrico write of conventionalized form-function composites, Pawley and Syder (1983) use the term *lexicalized sentence stems* for regular form-meaning pairings. They claim that English speakers know hundreds of thousands of such lexical units in which the grammatical form and lexical content are wholly or largely fixed but which are not true idioms.

Lexicalized sentence stems can be clause length or multiclausal complex sentences:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Clause length: | What's for dinner? Need any help? You would ask that question. |
| Multiclausal: | I told him, but he wouldn't listen. Be careful what you're doing with that. If I'd known then, what I know now . . . |

In addition, according to Pawley and Syder (1983), many semilexicalized (because they are less fixed) sequences possess permissible expansions or substitutions. In such cases, a formula can be extracted that consists of a nucleus of lexical and grammatical morphemes. For example, in the conventional expressions of apology for tardiness,

- I'm sorry to keep you waiting.**
- I'm so sorry to have kept you waiting.**
- Mr. X is sorry to keep you waiting all this time.**

a recurrent sequence can be isolated together with a grammatical frame:

NP be-TENSE sorry to keep-TENSE you waiting

Another example comes from Schmid (2001). He proposes that English speakers use *N be that* (where N is an abstract noun) to bluff. For example by using *the hope is that...* rather than *I hope that*, the speaker/writer's role is backgrounded and the proposition that follows sounds more objective and less open to question.

While lexical phrases and lexicalized sentence stems adhere for the most part to rules of English syntax, some are "extragrammatical" (Fillmore, Kay, & O'Connor, 1988) or "non-canonical" (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992). Consider the phrases *sight unseen*, *all of a sudden*, and *so far, so good*; each has a grammatical structure, but not one predictable from the rules of English. Nevertheless, canonical and noncanonical phrases exist in other languages as well and perform the same functions as they do in English (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992), so their existence and behavior should not come as a surprise to ESL/EFL students.

It has been known for some time that many beginning first and second language learners use large lexical units, giving them a fluency that they wouldn't ordinarily be capable of at such an early stage of acquisition. Bolinger (1976) maintains that a child learns collocations by hearing them in a variety of concrete contexts and later analyzing and abstracting the meaning of individual words. Then, too, evidence suggests that by later analyzing the stock of formulas they have acquired, learners are able to induce the grammatical rules and regular patterns of the target language (Wong Fillmore, 1976), a view very much in keeping with a usage-based perspective (Eskildsen, 2012). In addition, no doubt like native speakers of English, learners retain many of the lexical phrases and sentence stems as wholes because they conveniently fulfill certain functions or convey certain meanings. Indeed, Pawley and Syder (1983) observe that knowing these lexical phrases and sentence stems contributes to speakers' conversational fluency.

Such patterns are also indispensable when it comes to writing. Macqueen (2012) shows how English learners at the university level gradually developed mastery of constructions in their writing. One learner appeared to be working on the construction "have a/an... impact on...." The learner wrote, "...it can have a negative impact *above* some people...." Macqueen reports that from the beginning, the learner used the verb *have* to collocate with (adjective) *impact*, followed by a preposition. The learner also seemed to understand that *impact* is often preceded by a negative adjective. However, the learner had to work out which preposition to use, especially since the prepositions *on* and *above* are one form in her native language, Spanish.

The Meaning of Lexicogrammatical Items

We move now to the meaning of lexicogrammatical items. We begin with discussing processes that lead to the creation of new words and then go on to examine other semantic features.

PRODUCTIVE LEXICOGRAMMATICAL PROCESSES

In addition to fairly structured lexicogrammatical information such as we have given in the previous examples, the lexicogrammar is also shaped by three productive processes: compounding, derivational affixation, and conversion. It is important to understand these as well, for these processes are responsible, in part, for the creation of new items.

Compounding

Compounding, or putting together existing words to form a new lexical unit (*rain* + *coat* = *raincoat*), is a word-formation process that occurs in some languages. For example, the Germanic languages (this includes English) and the Chinese languages make rich use of compounding, whereas other languages make much less use of this process. According to the *Collins COBUILD English Grammar* (Sinclair & Fox, 1990), almost any noun can modify any other noun in English. Take the noun *house*, for instance. When it is first in the compound, we have *household*, *housemate*, *house sitter*, *houseboat*, *house arrest*, *houseguest*, *housefly*, *housekeeper*, *houselights*, *housewife*, *househusband*, and *housework*; when *house* is in second position in the compound, we have *lighthouse*, *birdhouse*, *steakhouse*, *jailhouse*, *pumphouse*, *doghouse*, and *alehouse*; and this list is not exhaustive by any means. Because both meanings are partly present, compound processing looks like a simple process, but their merging does not simply add both meanings; it creates a new semantic blend (Jullian, 2002). Many parts of speech can be combined in this way, sometimes ending up as one word, sometimes as two or more (e.g., *bathroom towel rack*).

Some of the most frequent English compounding patterns are:

noun + noun: **stone wall, baby blanket, rainbow**

noun + verb: **homemade, rainfall, lip-read**

noun + verb-er: **babysitter, can opener, screwdriver**

adj + noun: **blackbird, greenhouse, cold cream**

adj/adv + noun + -en: **quick-frozen, nearsighted, dim-witted**

prep + noun: **overlord, underdog, underworld**

prep + verb: **underestimate, undercut, overstep**

verb + particle: **makeup, breakdown, stakeout**

ESL/EFL students who speak a native language with little word compounding or with very different rules of word compounding may have trouble understanding and using compound words in English. Speakers of Romance languages may paraphrase and say “the sheet of the bed” instead of “the bedsheet” or may even reverse the order of elements in a compound and say “wine table” when they intend to say “table wine.”

As can be seen, the spelling of compound words proves a further complication because some are written as one word, some as two or more words, and some hyphenated. Sometimes the same word is written in more than one way: *baby sitter*, *baby-sitter*, or *babysitter*; with the spelling as two words eventually coalescing into one compound word after a period of use. Students have to be taught to use their dictionaries when in doubt about the proper spelling.

Derivational Affixation

Earlier in this chapter, we introduced the eight inflectional affixes of English. English words can also have derivational affixes, affixes that combine with stem (or base) forms to derive new words. Derivational affixes can be prefixes, which often change the meaning (*expatriate*, *unrepentant*), or suffixes, which usually change the part of speech of the word stem (*washable*, *childish*). In fact, it is possible for a word stem to have both a derivational prefix and suffix (*unthinkable*) or more than one suffix (*governmental*).²

ESL/EFL teachers should help their students learn the most common and useful derivational prefixes (e.g., *anti-*, *bi-*, *inter-*, *intra-*, *pre-*, *un-*) and suffixes (e.g., *-able*, *-er*, *-ism*, *-ist*, *-less*, *-ness*). This will help students expand their productive and receptive vocabularies. It is also worthwhile to spend some time on the common suffixes whose major function is to change one part of speech into another. For example, *-ous*, *-ary*, and *-ful* transform nouns into adjectives such as *famous*, *customary*, *successful*; and *-ness* and *-ity* transform adjectives into nouns such as *happiness* and *serenity*. ESL/EFL students can sometimes derive the nouns and verbs (e.g., *minimum*, *minimize*); much harder for them are deriving adjectives and adverbs (e.g., *minimal*, *minimally*), which they often avoid (Schmitt & Zimmerman, 2002).

It should be noted, however, that which words take which affixes is not always predictable. Students will sometimes attempt a new form with a derivational suffix that does not work (**suggestion*) or will think that a word has a common prefix, when in fact the “prefix” is part of the root (e.g., *relay*, *resent*). There is also potential confusion (on native English speakers’ parts as well) when having to choose between two words with different morphology that seem to be opposites, or at least different, but that actually have very similar meanings (e.g., *invaluable/valuable*; *slow up/slow down*; *admission/admittance*; *joyful/joyous*).

A final point to be made is that when both a derivational and an inflectional suffix are affixed to the same word, the inflectional suffix occurs last:

weaknesses

***weakness**

Conversion

The other important productive lexical process in English is *conversion*, which occurs when one part of speech is converted into another part of speech without any derivational affixation. Most conversion in English takes place when the underlying verb has a very general meaning, and the meaning of a noun object (direct or prepositional) becomes incorporated into the verb to show that something has been (1) added, (2) taken away, or (3) used for something.

1. **He put butter on his bread.** → **He *buttered* his bread.**
He poured water on the plants. → **He *watered* the plants.**
2. **Jo removed dust from the desk.** → **Jo *dusted* the desk.**
I took the pits out of the dates. → **I *pitted* the dates.**
3. **He cut the log with a saw.** → **He *sawed* the log.**
Sue gathered the leaves with a rake. → **She *raked* the leaves.**

This is a very productive process, and new words, or rather new functions for existing words, are always being coined. We can say “That book was a good read!” and novel conversions often accompany innovations; for example, we now *email* and *text* messages and *fedex* packages.

The example with *read* reminds us to mention that even though the dominant English conversion pattern occurs when noun meanings are incorporated into verbs, sometimes other parts of speech are involved. In the example, the verb *read* is nominalized.³ In the following case, a prepositional meaning is incorporated into the verb:

Hal walked across the street. → **Hal *crossed* the street.**

HOMONYMY AND POLYSEMY

Sometimes words have the same form but different meanings, as in *bear* (an animal, to carry). With such homonyms, there is identity of spelling and sound, but it is possible to have identity with regard to only one of these. When the similarity is with sound, it is called *homophony* (*there, their, they're*), and when it is with spelling, it is called *homography* (*wind blowing* versus *wind the clock*). Sometimes the part of speech is the same, but the meaning is different: *live* in *He lives* (= resides) *in Bangor* versus *He lives* (= is alive). In such cases, we have an example of *polysemy*, when one form with the same part of speech has a range of meanings.⁴

Homophones, homographs, and especially, polysemous forms represent problems for ESL/EFL students. Early on in their acquisition of vocabulary, students often adhere to the “one form, one meaning” principle. Since polysemous words are the most common words in the lexicon, confusion can reign. When students are struggling to understand a particular lexical item, sometimes it makes more sense to use a lower-frequency word to define it in order to avoid the ambiguity that can occur when using a word with more than one meaning. For example, we have found from our own teaching of beginning-level students that the polysemous adjective *hard* gets misconstrued, though the adjective *difficult* does not, when used to describe something that students find challenging.

An additional challenge in working with polysemy with ESL/EFL students is that sometimes a word in one language will share some of the meanings of the word in another language, but not all. Thus, a Spanish speaker learning English might speak of the *fingers* on his foot, as the Spanish word for fingers includes what English speakers have a separate lexical item for, *toes*. A related problem is the occurrence of *faux amis*, or false cognates—words that look as if they share the same meaning, but

do not. For example, the French word *librairie* corresponds to *bookstore*, not *library* in English. These last two examples hint at the difficulties of relying on translation from the lexicon of one language to another. Indeed, Slobin (1996) writes of “thinking for speaking” in explaining that languages encode certain ways of thinking. For instance, compare these English and Spanish sentences from Negueruela, Lantolf, Rehn Jordan, and Gelabert (2004).

The little bird hops out of the cage.

El pajarito sale de la jaula dando saltitos. (‘The little bird leaves from the cage giving hops!’)

The meaning of the English verb *hops* tells us the manner in which the bird exited the cage. Spanish speakers rarely conflate manner with motion, preferring to use a separate lexical item, here “giving hops,” for manner. While comprehension both ways is obviously possible, the lack of correspondence presents a challenge for relying on direct translation.

SEMANTIC FEATURES AND RESTRICTIONS

The information associated with a lexicogrammatical item also allows us to account for semantic compatibility (or semantic incompatibility) in several types of constructions:

subject-verb:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. a. The idea developed. | b. *The idea laughed. |
| 2. a. The dog sneezed. | b. *The worm sneezed. |

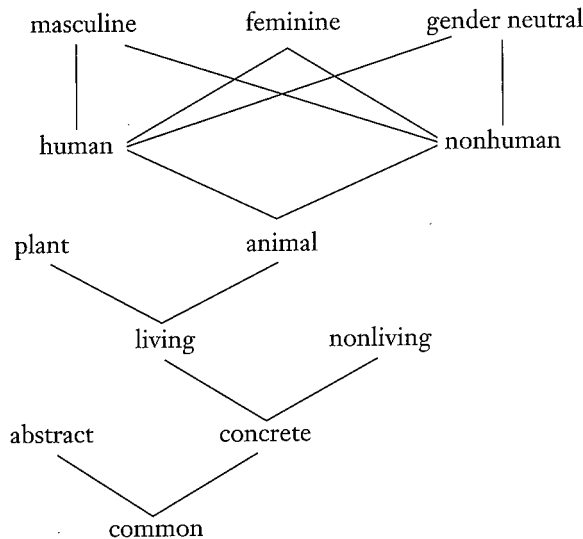
verb-object:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 3. a. The harsh winter killed the plants. | b. *The winter killed the rocks. |
|--|---|

adjective-noun:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 4. a. The basement was mildewed. | b. *The government was mildewed. |
| 5. a. The mare was pregnant. | b. *The stallion was pregnant. |

We can account for these incompatibilities in terms of a hierarchy of semantic features (going from low to high): common nouns are abstract or concrete, and concrete nouns are living or nonliving; living nouns are plant or animal, and animal nouns are human or nonhuman; finally, human and nonhuman animal nouns are masculine, feminine, or gender neutral.



Our hierarchy is simplified, but it will suffice to demonstrate why sentences 1b through 5b are unacceptable. Nouns with features at the bottom of the hierarchy are excluded when a higher feature is required; for example, the verb *laugh* in 1b requires a human subject, so any noun lower on the features hierarchy is excluded semantically. Although not reflected in our hierarchy, it is probably necessary to divide nonhuman animals into higher and lower animals because dogs and horses can “sneeze,” but worms and centipedes cannot (2b). Only living nouns can literally be killed, so that leaves 3b unacceptable; and only concrete (as opposed to abstract) nouns can literally be involved in action or processes such as falling, breaking, and mildewing, accounting for the unacceptability of 4b (although we admit it has appeal as a metaphor!—see the next section in this chapter). Finally, the adjective *pregnant* modifies or describes a mature female animal (hence the unacceptability of 5b). One of the most interesting things about these restrictions is that they are often violated in extension of meaning and figurative usage (e.g., *a pregnant pause, a broken heart*). And it is in these meaning extensions that languages differ.⁵

MEANING EXTENSION

A great many word meanings are figurative or metaphorical rather than (or in addition to) being literal. Indeed, it is the deliberate violation of these semantic constraints that results in the rich imagery of poetic language. For example, the following examples show how descriptions of natural phenomena can be coded as actions without external agents or even as personified human-like action:

| <i>Nature as Action</i> | <i>Nature Personified</i> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| The wind blew. | The wind whispered. |
| The brook flooded. | The brook roared. |
| The saplings swayed. | The saplings danced. |

Ascribing action and personification to nature represent common meaning extensions. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), in their book *Metaphors We Live By*, show just how pervasive our use of metaphoric language is. For example, the “container” metaphor is used frequently in English as a normal extension of meaning:

| <i>Literal</i> | <i>Metaphoric</i> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Put it into the basket. | Put it into words. |
| He’s in the garage. | He’s in love. |

Sometimes the same expression has both literal and figurative meaning, and the connection between literal and figurative use is not as obvious as in the previous examples. The nonobvious interpretation then becomes an *idiom*, a notoriously difficult type of lexical item for language learners:

| | |
|--|------------------|
| It’s in the bag. (= the object is located in the bag) | <i>literal</i> |
| (= the proposal is a reality/accepted) | <i>idiomatic</i> |

Familiarity with the extensions of meaning, the metaphors, and the idioms commonly employed in everyday language (and also, of course, in fables, allegories, poems, etc.) can be a great asset to learners in acquiring a new language.

DENOTATIONS, CONNOTATIONS, AND CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS

A word's *denotation* is its dictionary definition or referential meaning. For example, a cat is a feline quadruped. A *connotation* is the emotional association with a word. This association can be personal (as, for example, positive associations with the word for the month of your birth), or communal. With regard to the latter, Wierzbicka (1986) shows that while *only*, *merely*, and *just* all denote "It is not more than X" in the frame

I am going to buy that pen. It is $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{only} \\ \text{merely} \\ \text{just} \end{array} \right\} 50 \text{ cents.}$

their connotations for English speakers are different. *Only* is more neutral, whereas *merely* is deprecating, and *just* is mildly positive. Another example from Wierzbicka shows this even better: the expression *just for fun* could be used as an advertising slogan, but *merely for fun* wouldn't work to sell much!

When it comes to the communal or shared connotations of lexicogrammatical items, we can see how much our frame of reference influences the interpretations we give to words. Fillmore (1995) cites the tongue-in-cheek definition of *boy* from *A Feminist Dictionary*, compiled by Kramaræ and Treichler (1985):

boy. A male youth (cared for primarily by women) who is in training to support the institutions which state that his caretakers are kindly but otherwise inferior beings.

We can begin to appreciate how difficult it is to expect that a word in one language will have an equivalent in another. Wierzbicka (1988) points out that even concrete concepts such as *mouse* have culture-specific associations, determined by speakers' interests and attitudes as much as by any denotation. Although students will naturally resort to translating from their native language, as much as possible the lexicogrammatical items of English should be learned in their own right and within meaningful contexts.

LEXICAL ASPECT: SEMANTIC CLASSES OF VERBS

Verbs in any language can be classified according to the type of action or state they describe (Vendler, 1967). Some verbs, for example, are inherently punctual, such as *kick* or *bit*, meaning that the action is momentary, having no duration. Another category contains verbs that are inherently durative, such as *live* or *work*; use of these verbs implies that the action takes place over time. This semantic feature is often referred to as *lexical aspect*, a topic we discuss in Chapter 7, which deals with tense and aspect in English. What is significant about the lexicogrammatical aspect of verbs is that they express different meanings when they combine with certain grammatical morphemes. For example, punctual verbs take on an iterative meaning when they combine with the progressive (*be... -ing*), whereas durative verbs take on a sense of "temporariness" with the progressive:

She is hitting the rug with a stick in order to clean it. (repeatedly)

She is working in Halifax for the summer. (temporarily)

We could cite many other categories of verbs in which the meaning of the verb affects other aspects of the sentence, such as what kind of complement structure—gerund or infinitive—follows the verb. We will deal with these categories as they arise in connection with particular grammatical constructions. For now, though, these observations should remind us of why the term *lexicogrammar* is an appropriate hybrid.

ARGUMENT STRUCTURE OF VERBS

Closely related to the noun-verb syntactic restrictions and the notions of transitivity we discussed previously is the more semantic notion of “argument structure,” a term used by linguists and philosophers to describe the number of nouns or participants (i.e., arguments) typically associated with a verb and the relationship that those nouns have with the verb. If a verb takes one argument in English, it is intransitive and the noun argument functions as the subject:

One argument: **Milly arrived late.**

If the verb takes two arguments, one noun argument will function as the subject; however, the other noun argument could function as a direct object or as a locative prepositional phrase, or it could have some other role:

Two arguments: **Lloyd drank the beer.**

Andrew lives in Vancouver.

If the verb takes three arguments, one noun argument will function as the subject, one will function as the indirect object or recipient, and the other may function as a direct object; or the three arguments might function as subject, direct object, and locative prepositional phrase:

Three arguments: **Len gave me a book.**

Rhonda put the vase on the table.

Some arguments are optional. For example, a change-of-state or ergative verb like *open* must have as an argument the object that opens. Alternatively, it can also have an argument that expresses the agent, or cause, of the opening:

One or two arguments: **The door opened.**

Rafah opened the door.

According to Liu (2008), other intransitive verbs are object-deleting verbs, such as *forget*, *know*, *promise*, *remember*, and *see* (as in *understand*), where the object is recoverable from the context:

Yes, I promise.

And there are also transitive-turned-intransitive verbs of activity, such as *eat*, *drink*, *play*, and *read*, which focus on the activity, not the object:

He reads every night before he goes to bed.

Then, too, Goldberg (2006) shows how verb-argument constructions can have an abstract meaning that applies beyond specific verbs. For instance, one particular verb-argument construction has an underlying meaning of causing motion:

X causes Y to move Z (Z = path or location)

X Y Z

Sally set the plates on the table.

Julie hit the ball against the wall.

Tom chased the cat from the plants.

The meaning of this verb-argument construction can apply to verbs that don't ordinarily enter this construction, an intransitive verb, for example, in which case a new meaning is created.

Sally sneezed the napkin across the table.

Fillmore's approach to distinguishing verb meanings shows one application of the notion of semantic features and argument structure of verbs that we have been discussing. Beginning with the following examples, Fillmore (1968) proceeds to elaborate the semantic distinctions that must be captured in the lexical entries of the verbs *touch*, *strike*, and *break*:

1. **Peter touched the window.**

3. **Peter broke the window.**

2. **Peter struck the window.**

Fillmore points out that *break* in 3 is different from *touch* in 1 and *strike* in 2, in that 3 has a related intransitive sentence that the other two verbs do not have—that is, one of the noun arguments is optional:

4. *The window touched. 6. The window broke.
 5. *The window struck.

In addition, the verb *break* seems to require that its object be rigid, while *touch* and *strike* do not share this requirement. Consider these examples:

7. Peter touched the dog. 9. ?Peter broke the dog.
 8. Peter struck the dog.

In 7 and 8, the dog can be a living animal, and the difference in meaning is one of relative intensity of impact: striking denotes a stronger, sharper impact than touching. In 9, however, the dog has to be an inanimate figure made of something breakable, such as plaster, ceramic, or glass.

Fillmore (1968) made several other useful generalizations about these verbs, but these examples demonstrate that understanding a lexicogrammatical item entails, among other things, knowing precisely how it differs from other similar items. This brings us to the issue of semantic fields.

SEMANTIC FIELDS

As we have been attempting to show, words can often be understood only in terms of their relationship to other words. On a very simple level, when an ESL student asks what *wet* means, perhaps the best explanation would be to use its *antonym*, or opposite, and reply, *not dry*. This explanation would not work, of course, unless the student knew the meaning of the antonym.

Another concept that is helpful in defining words in relation to other words is the concept of a *semantic field*, a cluster of words that cover a particular semantic area and can best be understood in relation to one another. Examples of semantic fields most often cited are kinship terms and terms for colors in a language. The precise meaning of a color word can best be understood by seeing it in relation to other words that cover the spectrum.

Even though defining colors is difficult, as there isn't necessarily a one-to-one correspondence between languages, they can be illustrated more easily than words in other semantic fields. Take, for example, adjectives denoting physical attractiveness (*beautiful*, *lovely*, *pretty*, *attractive*, *good-looking*, *handsome*, etc.), items from the same semantic field, which therefore have some features in common. We could apply a semantic feature analysis (also called a *componential analysis*) by listing the features across the horizontal axis of a grid and the words belonging to the same semantic field along the vertical axis.

A SEMANTIC FEATURE ANALYSIS

| | <i>Making a pleasant impression on the senses</i> | <i>Close to an ideal</i> | <i>Suggesting relative smallness</i> | <i>Suggesting femininity or delicacy</i> | <i>Arousing interest</i> |
|------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| beautiful | X | X | | | |
| pretty | X | | X | X | |
| attractive | X | | | | X |

Adapted from Gairns and Redman (1986)

Even this abbreviated analysis of the semantic features shows that we can to some extent become more precise about the meaning of a word. These three words—*beautiful*, *pretty*, *attractive*—are not synonyms. Such an analysis, modified for the sake of comprehension, may assist ESL/EFL students who ask about the differences among words in a semantic field. Still, even this level of precision is not very satisfying. While such an analysis can assist us in being able to detect differences among these items, it should also be clear that this type of discrete feature analysis can also be misleading. For one thing, we may not agree on the exact defining features of a word. For another, it may be impossible to pin down all the semantic nuances of a word in sufficient detail. Leech (1981) suggests that most words have “fuzzy” meanings.

PROTOTYPICALITY

To explore further the fuzziness of meaning, consider the notion of prototypicality. It is well known that mammals have certain characteristics: They have fur or hair, they give birth to live offspring, and they nurse their young. And yet, it is also well known that certain animals are classified as mammals even though they do not meet all the criteria (e.g., a platypus lays eggs but is considered a mammal). As Givón (1993) reminds us, membership in natural categories is not determined by rigid adherence to all criteria. Rather, membership is determined by a cluster of criteria. Further, some of these criteria are more central than others. Thus, we might say that a bear is a more prototypical mammal than a platypus.

To take a linguistic example, there are many verbs of speaking: *say*, *tell*, *speak*, *talk*, *mention*, *remark*, *comment*, *shout*, *whisper*, and so on. Were we to perform a componential analysis of these verbs and others in their semantic class, we would find that some of the features are true of some of the verbs but not true of others. We saw this earlier with adjectives of physical attractiveness. We would also see, however, that some of the features are more central for membership in the class than others. For instance, that they all have to do with oracy is central, while the manner in which the oracy is performed is only encoded in two of the verbs and is therefore less central. If someone were to ask us to give an example of a prototypic verb of speech, we would most likely choose one of the first four on the list. We revisit the concept of prototypicality later in this book. As Lewis (1997) reminds us, considerations of prototypicality are very important when thinking of examples to give ESL/EFL students of a certain lexicogrammatical phenomenon. Indeed, Ellis and Larsen-Freeman (2009) discuss how frequently-occurring, semantically-prototypical verbs may aid second language learners in acquiring the semantics of English verb-argument constructions.

The Use of Lexicogrammatical Items

You may be asking yourself why we have not yet mentioned true synonymy—two words with the same meaning. The reason is simple. Rarely will two linguistic forms mean exactly the same thing, for if they did, there would be little reason to have them both in the language. Thus, at best we can talk about partial synonymy. We do not mean to dismiss the use of synonyms, for giving a partial synonym is often the most efficient way of giving students the meaning of a particular word. It is important, though, to remain cognizant of the differences between words and, in the case of more intermediate and advanced students, to highlight the semantic differences. It is also true that what distinguishes words is not always their semantic differences; words can differ because of their use: different

dialects (e.g., British English *lorry* versus North American English *truck*); different registers (e.g., *friend* versus *buddy*); or they are age-graded, meaning that a certain age group will use them (e.g., adolescents using *awesome* as an adjective of approval); or they are no longer fashionable (e.g., adolescents today would not accept *groovy* as a substitute for *awesome*).

Whatever one learns about the meaning and formal requirements of a lexical item, one cannot ignore the context in which it is used. For example, Carter and McCarthy (1988) discuss the example of the word *stocking*, which takes on quite a different meaning when it refers to silk or nylon stockings as opposed to Christmas stockings. The former type of stockings are worn by women, but the latter type are worn by no one. They are simply stocking-shaped containers intended for small Christmas gifts or simply Christmas decorations attached to a fireplace mantel (or a wall or door).

REGISTER

Even with lexicogrammatical items that seem to mean the same thing, there may be register differences. For instance, there are four common quotative verbs (*say, be like, go, be all*), used especially in young English speakers' speech:

"But now he's like, 'OK, we've got to make this happen.'"

Barbieri (2005) examined their use in four different registers: casual conversation, university service encounters and workplace conversation, university students' study groups, and academic office hour consultations. She found that *be like* and *go* occur in all four registers, while *be all* is less common. In addition, the last three quotatives, the newer ones, all occur more frequently with the present tense, while the traditional quotative, *say*, takes the past tense more frequently. Her analyses of the patterns of use of the quotatives support the hypothesis that *be like* is expanding in American English. We will have more to say about quotatives in Chapter 33 on reported speech and writing.

DISCOURSE COMMUNITIES

We mentioned earlier the effect of cultural differences with regard to the connotation of words. Other linguistic differences have been viewed from a cultural perspective as well. For example, Atkinson and Ramanathan (1995) showed the disadvantage that nonnative speakers of English experience when their ESL writing instructors operate with a different set of cultural norms about what academic writing is than do instructors of writing classes for native speakers.

Other differences accompany divergent social practices or discourses (Gee, 1990). Within each discourse community, certain norms exist concerning what constitutes appropriate ways of speaking or writing. For example, an educational administrator might say,

Prior to the administration of the assessment instrument, a skills-level analysis must be conducted to ascertain the critical level of preparedness of the target population.

whereas a classroom teacher might say,

Before we give the test, we'd better find out if these particular students are ready for it.

So, *assessment instruments are administered* and *tests are given*. The administrator's statement might seem wordy and obscure compared with the teacher's simple and direct way of saying the same thing. However, it is important to remember that language does not serve only to express propositional meaning. A particular discourse functions as "a sort of 'identity kit', which comes complete with [ways] to act, talk, and often write, so as to take

on a particular social role that others will recognize” (Gee, 1990, p. 42). Clearly, knowing a language is not simply knowing a phrase book.

It would seem that when language is formulaic, lexical items and conventions of use (i.e., collocations and lexical phrases) appear to be extremely important, whereas when language is more original and less formulaic, where precision and disambiguation are crucial, then the grammatical end of the continuum is more important than the lexical. As Nyyssönen (1995) notes, it follows that if the learner could make appropriate and effective use of the collocations and lexical phrases that are routinely employed by proficient speakers in large quantities, and if the learner could also make use of grammar to adapt the patterns as necessary and to achieve contextual fit, his or her language acquisition process would be well served.

Conclusion

The information that learners of English must master regarding the lexicogrammar is extensive. It is not sufficient simply to know many lexical items and their general meanings. For each item, speakers must master a network of related information about its form, meaning, and use if they wish to use the item accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. Also, clearly, we can no longer think of the lexicon as a list of words having specified properties subject to combinatory rules. We must think of the lexicogrammar as being composed of multiword units with semantic and pragmatic features as well.

Despite the complexity of what we have presented here, we must introduce yet another level of difficulty. We have treated the lexicon as a static inventory. In fact, lexicogrammar is anything but static. It has been estimated that English increases by about 20,000 words annually. At a more local level, it has also been argued that many of the features and constraints that we have treated here as part of a lexicogrammatical item, are in fact, mutable in dynamic discourse. For example, Thompson and Hopper (1997) have asserted that argument structure isn't a fixed property of predicates in the mental lexicon; rather, it is fluid and adaptable to conversational goals. Language can be described both as a process and a product. While we deal more with language as product in this book, we acknowledge that both perspectives are necessary, and so we return to consider the dynamism of language at several points later on.

Teaching Suggestions

- 1. Form.** When teaching vocabulary, it is good not just to teach words, but to teach clusters of factors that will help students to use lexicogrammatical items correctly. For example, use *a/an* when introducing countable nouns (e.g., *a theory*); use *to* when introducing verbs (e.g., *to arrive*); show that verbs are transitive by adding an indefinite object such as *something* (*to propose something*); and use *to be* when introducing adjectives (e.g., *to be naive*). Also indicate any prepositions needed, where relevant (e.g., *to be interested in something*).
- 2. Form.** Recommend to students that they use good learners' dictionaries to find grammatical information themselves. In addition, with dictionary activities you can ask students to find collocations either from learners' dictionaries or online sources.
 - a.** Find two adjectives that can go before the noun *tone*.
 - b.** What two prepositions can be used after the noun *rejection*?
 - c.** Is *arouse* a transitive or intransitive verb? Find three nouns that go before or after the verb *arouse*.

3. **Form.** Nation (1990, p. 151) suggests an inductive method to draw students' attention to the form of words, using exercises like the following:
- Look at the word *insanity* in this sentence. What part of speech is it? Is it countable or uncountable? How do you know this?
He saw the beginning of insanity in her.
 - Look at *inhabit* in this sentence. What part of speech is it followed by?
Woodpeckers inhabit hollow trees.
4. **Form.** Low-intermediate ESL/EFL students often confuse the related forms of a word. If a new item has related forms as other parts of speech, these other parts should also be introduced with example sentences that make the learner actively discriminate among them. For example:
- a theory to theorize to be theoretical
Cynthia is very (1)_____ about everything. She has just developed a new
(2)_____. She (3)_____ that the less one works, the more one will succeed at
certain tasks.
5. **Form.** Norbert Schmitt (in Nation, 1994, p.148) suggests a game of collocation bingo, in which the teacher reads out a list of words, and students have bingo cards containing words that collocate with the teacher's words. Students write the word they hear in the same square as a word on their card that they think collocates with it. The normal game of bingo proceeds.
6. **Meaning.** To encourage students to use productive word-formation processes that have been introduced to them, contextualized definition exercises such as the following can be useful:
- A _____ is a machine that detects smoke in a home, school, or office building and sounds an alarm.
 - Someone who believes in and follows the ideas of Marx is called a _____.
 - A person who employs others is an (1)_____; a person who is employed by someone else is an (2)_____.
7. **Meaning.** Intermediate to advanced-level students often confuse related derivations that have the same root and are the same part of speech, such as the following adjectives:
- | | | | |
|---------|----------------|--------------|------------|
| various | discriminating | identifying | fortunate |
| varied | discriminatory | identifiable | fortuitous |
- Exercises that teach students to distinguish such forms provide contexts that call for one or the other, but not both, such as the forms *discriminating* or *discriminatory*:
- The minority students complained because they felt some of the school regulations were _____.
 - I knew that I could trust his judgment; he has _____ taste in such matters.
- Students should understand why the words have the same root and part of speech (i.e., what the similarity in meaning is), yet why the words are different (i.e., what the crucial distinction is).
8. **Use.** As a consciousness-raising activity, have your students locate on the Internet or from material in other courses several texts, two to three paragraphs in length, that all deal with the same topic in a particular discipline. Guide students in conducting a search for lexicogrammatical patterns that appear to be norms of the particular discourse community from which the texts come.

9. **Use.** Teach students how to create a concordance from a linguistic corpus (e.g., Reppen, 2010). With a concordance, students will be able to discover for themselves contexts in which target words are used.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide an original sentence or two illustrating each of the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) or word parts in your examples.
- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| a. verbs requiring a locative prepositional phrase | j. transitive verb |
| b. determiner requiring an uncountable noun | k. verb with three arguments |
| c. conversion | l. irregular plural |
| d. change-of-state verb | m. lexical phrase |
| e. compound word | n. durative verb |
| f. derivational affix | o. verb-direct object collocation |
| g. inflectional affix | p. co-occurrence with a preposition |
| h. transitive adjective | q. quotative verb |
| i. semantic field | r. polysemy |
2. Why are the following sentences ungrammatical?
- *The burglar lurked.
 - *It fascinated the alarm clock.
 - *I don't like these book.
 - *There have to be some breakthrough soon.
 - *Anyone who is a good friend must be trustful.
 - *My favoritism is for coffee, but I also drink tea.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

3. If your students produce the following sentences, what norms of Standard English have they not followed?
- *I got many *informations* from the book.
 - **In* my point of view, I think that's a bad idea.
 - ?They are remodeling the streets.
 - *People living in the United States use *crackerfires* on the Fourth of July.
 - *Photography has *passionated* me since I was a child.
 - *Solutions to reduce birth rates, especially within developing countries, need to be met.
 - *Mr. Wilson was not aware *to* his daughter's problems.
 - ?*By pure fortune*, we met on the train.

4. How would you answer an ESL/EFL student who asks you what the differences are among the following verbs: see, look, watch, stare, peer, and glance?
5. How would you answer an ESL/EFL student who asks you why pretty, which has to do with beauty, is used with soon, in the phrase pretty soon.
6. How would you answer an ESL/EFL student who asked you what the difference is between owing to and due to?
7. To make the point that compounds are not just two words added together, but rather that fusing two words often creates a new meaning, Jullian (2002) offers the following examples where one of the two words is board. Paraphrase each example to show how the interaction with board differs.

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| keyboard | ironing board |
| whiteboard | snowboard |
| chessboard | clipboard |

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For a thorough analysis of what it takes to know a lexicogrammatical item, see:

Fillmore, C. J., Kay, P., & O'Connor, M. C. (1988). Regularity and idiomaticity in grammatical constructions: The case of *let alone*. *Language*, 64(3), 501–538.

For exercises to work with English affixes, see:

Farid, A. (1985). *A vocabulary workbook: Prefixes, roots, and suffixes for ESL students*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

For research on affixation, consult:

Ryder, M. (1999). Bankers and blue-chippers: An account of *-er* formations in present-day English. *English Language and Linguistics*, 3(2), 269–297.

For a list of verbs and adjectives followed by particular prepositions, consult:

Clark, R., Moran, P., & Burrows, A. (2007). *The ESL miscellany* (4th ed.). Brattleboro, VT: Pro Lingua Associates.

For a list and treatment of prepositional clusters, see:

Frodesen, J., & Eyring, J. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 4* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For many examples of compounding patterns, see:

Bolinger, D. (1975). *Aspects of language* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

For research on binominals, see:

Benor, S., & Levy, R. (2006). The chicken or the egg? A probabilistic analysis of English binominals. *Language*, 82(2), 233–278.

For a list of lexical phrases, see:

Keller, R. (1979). Gambits: Conversational strategy signals. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 3, 219–237.

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For an example of a pedagogical approach in which words are grouped into semantic sets (groups of related words), take a look at:

Seal, B. (1990). *American English vocabulary builder* (Vols. 1–2). New York, NY: Longman.

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For online searchable English corpora, see:

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For academic word and phrase lists and working with them, see:

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Endnotes

1. The only way that English nouns are morphologically irregular is with respect to plural formation. Only countable nouns, of course, would exhibit such irregularity.
2. Multiple prefixes are unusual but not impossible, to wit: *antidisestablishmentarianism*. Note that this word has two prefixes, but four suffixes.
3. Interestingly, Langacker (1991) notes that there is a crosslingual asymmetrical pattern whereby it is normal in languages for another part of speech to be nominalized—that is, made into a noun—without any apparent change in meaning, whereas when a noun is converted into a verb, some new meaning has been added. As we have indicated previously, the new meaning might be “add noun” (*to salt*), “remove noun” (*to weed*), “use noun as an instrument” (*to glue*), “turn into noun” (*to liquefy*), and so on.
4. It should be noted as a counterpoint that the lexicographer, Charles Ruhl (1989), argues that virtually all polysemy is an illusion. He means that if you get abstract enough, you can find a single “general” meaning for each word, which holds regardless of context. We will return to this notion when we consider prepositions, and will thus explore it more fully in Chapter 21.
5. And even when languages don’t differ in the meaning extensions, learners are uncertain as to whether or not they can use the English lexical item in the same way. For instance, Kellerman (1979) found that although Dutch and English use the verb “to break” (*breken* in Dutch) in a similar manner, Dutch learners of English accepted the possibility of using English *break* literally (*He broke his leg*), but not figuratively (*He broke the record*), even though both meanings were acceptable in Dutch and English.

Copular Verbs and Subject-Verb Agreement

Introduction

In Chapter 2, we introduced a category of verbs called *linking verbs*. They are often referred to as *copular verbs*, verbs that link the subject with the predicate. They connect the subject of a sentence to additional information concerning the subject, such as the subject's identity and qualities.

Marion is a librarian.

She is helpful.

As may be evident from our examples, the most common linking verb is the copula *to be* (*is* being one form of the *be* verb). Many languages do not have an equivalent verb. Chinese, for example, doesn't use a *be* verb in sentences with adjectives such as *helpful*, our second example, especially when the sentence contains an auxiliary verb, such as *will* (Chan, 2010, 2014). In other words, a perfectly acceptable Chinese sentence in its English translation is *She will very helpful*. Then, too, African-American Vernacular English, Hebrew, Arabic, and Russian, do not use a copula before adjectives, e.g., *He crazy*.

Other typical problems for Russian learners are the substitution of the auxiliary verb *do* for *be*, e.g., **Does Prague a nice city?* and the overuse of *be* in sentences with other main verbs, e.g., **He is like sport*. (Unlu & Hatipoglu, 2012). Similarly, Japanese learners omit the copula in English, e.g., **My father a teacher* and overuse it elsewhere, e.g., **He is like music* (Tode, 2003). Tode observes that such overuse errors may be due to students treating the frequent sequence of pronoun + *is* as a formula. In other words, students are not thinking in terms of supplying a copula verb; they are simply using pronoun + *is* as a clause-initial unit.

Another feature of the English verb *to be* is that its five forms make it the most irregular verb in English. For students who speak languages without a copular verb, learning to use one then will be a challenge, especially for students at the beginning proficiency level.

A far more persistent challenge for ESL/EFL students is remembering to put the *-s* on the end of other present tense verbs when the subject is the third person singular (e.g., *He walks to school*). Perhaps for a combination of reasons—its relative infrequency, as compared with other forms of verbs, its lack of salience (the final *-s*, in all its forms, is hard to detect in speech), and the fact that it possesses limited semantic content—all conspire to make the addition of *-s* a notorious problem long after students have gone beyond the beginning level.

In this chapter, we will examine more closely the *be* verb and other copular verbs. Then, we will examine the forms of other verbs, especially focusing on the third person singular present tense. We will discuss the rule of subject-verb agreement in English, whereby the verb must agree in number and person with the subject. One would think that making the verb form agree with the subject would be especially easy in English, as there are relatively few verb forms; however, as we shall see, subject-verb agreement presents some difficulty even for native speakers of English. One reason for this is that the prescriptive rules that learners are given often clash with actual usage. Thus, even though subject-verb agreement appears to be a rule about form, the long-term learning challenge is learning when to apply it.

Copular Verbs

There are at least four very good reasons for making a distinction between copular verbs (especially the *be* verb) and other verbs. First of all, *be*, which is the most frequent verb in English, has more distinct forms with respect to person, number, and tense than any other verb in English. The traditional paradigm for *be* compared with that for a lexical verb such as *walk* makes this clear:

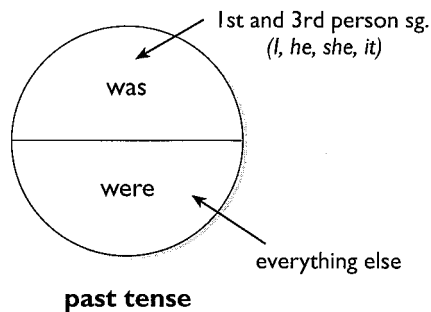
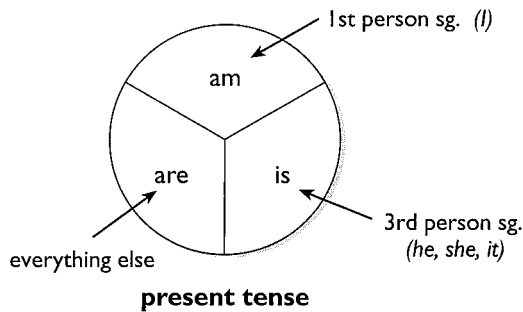
| COPULA BE | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|----------|---------------|-----------|
| Present Tense | | | Past Tense | |
| Person | Singular | Plural | Singular | Plural |
| 1st | I am | we are | I was | we were |
| 2nd | you are | you are | you were | you were |
| 3rd | he/she/it is | they are | he/she/it was | they were |

| VERB WALK | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------|------------------|-------------|
| Present Tense | | | Past Tense | |
| Person | Singular | Plural | Singular | Plural |
| 1st | I walk | we walk | I walked | we walked |
| 2nd | you walk | you walk | you walked | you walked |
| 3rd | he/she/it walks | they walk | he/she/it walked | they walked |

Thus, a verb like *walk* has two present-tense forms and one past-tense form:

- Present: **walks**—third person singular
 walk—all other persons and numbers
- Past: **walked**—all persons and numbers

The verb *be*, on the other hand, has three distinct present-tense and two past-tense forms to distinguish person and number (singular or plural). Some of the forms are more restricted in their range than others, and this is represented in the following diagrams:



Second, the copula *be* may be followed by adjective phrases, a defining characteristic that it shares with many other copular verbs.¹ Although *be* is the most frequent and the semantically most neutral copula, there are three other types of copular verbs:

1. *perception copulas* (mental or sensory):

They { appear
seem
feel
look
smell
sound
taste } funny (to me).

2. *state copulas* (tend to take participial adjectives):²

They { lie
remain
rest
stand } protected.

3. *change-of-state copulas* (not all of these copulas collocate with all of these adjectives):³

They { become
come
fall
get
go
grow
run
turn } { tall
true
ill
wild }.

The copula *be* can be followed not only by adjective phrases, but also by noun phrases and adverbial phrases⁴ (i.e., it is the grammatically most flexible copular verb):

Naomi is { attractive
an actor
in New York }.

Most of the other copular verbs can be followed only by adjective phrases except for the change-of-state copulas *become*⁵ and *turn*,⁶ which can be followed by noun phrases as well as adjective phrases:

Naomi became { an actor
attractive }.

She turned { traitor
wild }.

The third reason that copula *be* is so different is due to its syntactic behavior. It behaves like an auxiliary verb with regard to negation (see Chapter 10), question formation (see Chapter 11), and other constructions. What this means is the copula is very different from other verbs like *walk*, which require the addition of a *do* auxiliary to form questions and negatives if no other auxiliary verb is present.

Hal **is** an engineer. Hal **walks** to work.
Is Hal an engineer? **Does** Hal walk to work?
Hal **isn't** a teacher. Hal **doesn't** walk home.

Other copular verbs take a *do* auxiliary in questions and negatives, too:

Did he get taller?
I don't feel well.

Failure to recognize the special status of the *be* copula in the formation of questions and negative sentences leads learners to make questions and sentences such as the following:

***Do they be happy?** (for "Are they happy?")
***We don't be teachers.** (for "We aren't teachers.")

Finally, as we have seen, the copula *be* does not occur in all languages, but all languages have verbs. Especially in the present tense, many languages have nothing equivalent to the copula *be*; speakers of such languages simply express the literal equivalent of sentences in their L1 like the three below, and this pattern readily transfers to English during their initial learning stage:

***Hal engineer.** ***Hal in next room.**
***Hal tall.**

In sum, a verb is copular if it specifically predicates something about the subject of the verb. However, we agree with Langacker (1991) that *be* is not merely a semantically empty linking verb, as some linguists have suggested. For Langacker, *be* is a true verb marking a stative relation (p. 65).

Subject-Verb Agreement

FORM

Third Person Singular Present

Standard grammatical treatments state that for verbs other than *be*, number agreement between the subject and verb (sometimes referred to as *subject-verb concord*) is a factor only in the present tense, where third person singular forms are explicitly inflected and other forms are not:

| Number | | |
|--------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Person | Singular | Plural |
| 1st | I speak French. | We speak French. |
| 2nd | You speak French. | You speak French. |
| 3rd | He/she/it (the parrot) speaks French. | They speak French. |

According to the rule of subject-verb agreement, then, the subject and verb number choice will agree: In the present tense, we use the third person singular inflection (-s or the *be* form *is*) if the subject refers to one entity, whether it is a singular proper name, a singular common noun, a non-count noun, or a third person singular pronoun. Elsewhere—for nouns or pronouns referring to more than one entity or for first or second person pronouns referring to one entity⁷—no inflection is used in the present tense:

Third person singular inflection on verb

Leon walk**s** to school.

The bus stop**s** here.

This water taste**s** funny.

She want**s** an apple.

No inflection on verb

The Smiths walk to church.

These books contain good information.

We
You
They } want an apple.

I
You } want an apple.

To this formulation, we should add that if there is an inflectable, tense-bearing auxiliary verb such as *be* or *have*, it is the auxiliary verb that takes the third person singular inflection (not the main verb):

Leon **is** walking to school.

This water **has** boiled for 10 minutes.

Some Typical Learner Productions

As we mentioned earlier, ESL/EFL learners tend to simplify and leave off altogether the third person singular inflection:

***Sharon live in Seattle. *Harry say he will come.**

Occasionally, however, some learners will overgeneralize the inflection and apply it to uninflected forms, such as modal auxiliaries, or to verbs following modals (see Chapter 8):

***Jack cans dance disco.**

—or—

***Jack can dances disco.**

They also may overuse it as an agreement marker with subjects of inappropriate person and/or number:

*I
*They
*You } hangs out at the mall on the weekends.

Yet another reason why some learners overuse this form is that they interpret the -s ending as a plural marker on the verb and use in agreement with plural subjects:

*They
*The boys } goes to the movies there.

Finally, it has also been observed that some Spanish speakers tend to initially overuse the -s inflection with the second person singular pronoun because a similar form is used in their language when the subject noun reflects this person:

Spanish: Tú habla**s** inglés.

English: *You speak**s** English.

By far, the most common error in subject-verb agreement is the first one we mentioned, that of the learner simply omitting the inflection for third person singular. Research in both language typology and second language acquisition can help us understand why this is so.

The languages of the world can be roughly divided into topic-prominent languages with pragmatic word order (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) and subject-prominent languages with grammatical word order (e.g., English, Spanish, and Arabic); the former never mark subject-verb agreement, whereas the latter typically do. Thus, it seems plausible that learners of English with a topic-prominent first language would find it more difficult to master subject-verb agreement than learners whose native language is subject-prominent like English. However, research in second language acquisition by Fuller and Gundel (1987) suggests that most learners pass through an early topic-prominent stage regardless of their first language. In analyzing the elicited oral narratives produced by low-intermediate learners of English, these researchers found no significant differences between native speakers of topic-prominent languages and those of subject-prominent languages. Speakers of both types demonstrated lack of agreement. Language acquisition researchers (e.g., Klein & Perdue, 1997) have also reported that untutored adult learners with many different language backgrounds often initially speak a “basic variety” of the language that they are learning—one with no inflections, where words occur in invariant form.

Agreement errors may be due to phonological or perceptual factors rather than syntactic or morphological cross-linguistic differences. ESL/EFL teachers should be aware of the fact that some learners of English fully understand the third person singular present ending and can even produce it systematically when they write in English; however, they omit it frequently when they are speaking. One reason for this is because the sound system of their native language tends not to permit final /s/ sounds in particular or final consonants in general. Speakers of French and a variety of other languages have been observed to do this when speaking English.

Of course, other reasons for the slow and late acquisition of the third person singular present inflection on the verb—even when there is no phonological interference from the learner’s native language—might be its lack of perceptual saliency⁸ and its low frequency of occurrence in native speaker speech (Larsen-Freeman, 1976; Goldschneider & DeKeyser, 2005). The third person singular present tense inflection tends to be omitted for these and other reasons as well. For example, the omission of the *-s* is a feature of English as a *lingua franca*, likely due to a regularization process (Jenkins, 2012). Also, it is the only inflection in the present tense and has little communicative utility since the person/number is almost always clear from the subject noun phrase, just as it is with the other persons and numbers that do not take any inflection. Such is not the case, of course, when the subject remains the same whether it is singular or plural. For example, with nouns of animals, such as “sheep,” the inflection is meaningful:

In the spring, the sheep graze in the meadow.

In the spring, the sheep grazes in the meadow.

However, there are relatively few times when the subject is not distinguished in number. Of course, the *-s* is also important in distinguishing present and past tense when they are isomorphic, as they are with verbs such as *read*, *hit*, *fit*, etc:

Stan reads the newspaper every day.

Stan read the newspaper every day.

MEANING

Reid (1991) believes that the subject-verb agreement rule is not grounded in syntactic automaticity, but that its use reflects a series of semantic choices and decisions made by the speaker-writer. In other words, it is not simply a matter of agreement based on form. There are reasons for using a singular or plural verb. Reid proposes that all English nouns (in this case, nouns that happen to function as subjects) have a number, which is either *one* or *more than one*. The number *more than one* can be encoded either lexically (e.g., *people, they*) or, more typically, morphologically with the plural inflection *-s* (e.g., *several boys*). In some cases, lexical and morphological number can even co-occur and give new meaning to words (e.g., *peoples*).

Similarly, all English verbs have a number. Except for the verb *be*, English verbs encode number only in the present tense:

| Present tense verb ending | Meaning | Example |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| -s | One | The boy runs. |
| -∅ | More than one | The boys run. |

Reid further proposes that the choice of number is made separately for both the subject noun and the verb (*be* or present tense lexical verbs) and that both choices contribute independently to the speaker's message. This perspective allows Reid to explain why the number of the subject noun and the verb, while most often the same, do not always agree since all combinations are possible though not equally frequent. The most frequent choices (i.e., the agreements) are the examples in the shaded boxes numbered 1 and 4:

| | | NOUN SUBJECT | |
|------|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | <i>One</i> | <i>More Than One</i> |
| VERB | <i>One</i> | The boy likes candy. 1 | Ten dollars is not a lot of money. 2 |
| | <i>More Than One</i> | The family are all here 3 | The boys like candy. 4 |

The examples in boxes 2 and 3 are unusual in that an overtly plural subject in 2 is reinterpreted as a singular lump sum, and an overtly singular subject in 3 is reinterpreted as a plural entity. We know this has been done by the speaker/writer because of the verb forms chosen: singular *is* in 2 and plural *are* in 3. The choice is complex, and for Reid, it is based on the speaker's message and communicative intent in each case.¹⁰

Examples of Reid's (1991) semantic system are easy to understand and cause little or no difficulty—at least not at the conceptual level. Here are ten examples where this is the case.

1. Collective nouns (see Chapter 17), like the one in box 3 of the preceding matrix, may take either a singular or plural verb inflection depending on the meaning.¹¹ If the subject noun is conceived of as one entity, the verb carries the *-s* inflection; if the subject is felt to be more than one entity, the verb takes no inflection. (Note that other forms showing number agreement (e.g., determiners or pronouns) may also change to reflect the number selected.)

Our school team has won all its games. (= the team as a whole)

Our school team have won all their games. (= individual team members)

2. Some common and proper nouns ending in *-s*, including *-ics* nouns and certain diseases, are always conceived of as a single entity and take a singular verb inflection:

No news is good news.

Physics is a difficult subject.

This series is very interesting.

Wales is lovely to visit.

Measles is a contagious disease.

3. Titles of books, plays, operas, films, and such works—even when plural in form—take the singular verb inflection because they are conceived as a single entity:

***Great Expectations* was written by Dickens.**

***The Pirates of Penzance* is my favorite operetta.**

4. Nouns occurring in sets of two take the singular when the noun *pair* is present but take the plural when *pair* is absent—even if only one pair is being referred to:

A pair of trousers is on the sofa.

This pair of shoes needs new heels.

Todd's trousers are on the sofa.

These shoes need new heels.

5. *A number of* normally takes the plural, while *the number of* normally takes the singular:

A number of students have dropped that course.

The number of students in this school is 2,000.

This generalization holds true most of the time because the noun *number* in the phrase *the number of* generally modifies or implies a single entity such as a sum or a totality, whereas the noun *number* in the phrase *a number of* normally modifies or implies more than one entity.¹²

6. Fractions and percentages take a singular verb inflection when modifying a noncount noun and the plural verb inflection when they modify a plural noun; either the singular or the plural verb inflection may be used when they modify a collective noun, depending on the speaker's meaning:

noncount: **One half of the toxic waste has escaped.**

Fifty percent of the toxic waste has escaped.

plural: **Two thirds of the students are satisfied with the class.**

Sixty-six percent of the students are satisfied with the class.

collective: **One tenth of the population of Egypt** $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{is Christian.} \\ \text{are Christians.} \end{array} \right.$

Ten percent of the population of Egypt $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{is Christian.} \\ \text{are Christians.} \end{array} \right.$

7. *Majority/Minority (Of)*¹³

- a. The proximity principle

When *majority* or *minority* are followed by an *of* phrase, the proximity principle dictates subject-verb agreement in the vast majority of cases. In other words, when the noun in the *of* phrase—which will be situated nearest the verb—is singular, singular agreement results, and when it is plural, plural agreement results:

| Agreement | Type of Noun | Example |
|-----------|--------------|---|
| singular | singular | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, the majority of policy analysis has determined salary increases have a minimum effect in retaining teachers. • Only a small minority of human communication is mediated through the words used. |
| plural | plural | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minority of buyers insist on a golf-course view. • Just because a minority of drivers abuse a privilege is no reason to get rid of the privilege. |

b. Collective nouns

The situation is somewhat more complex when no *of* phrase is present. An explanation that is often put forward for subject-verb agreement treats *majority* and *minority* as collective nouns. Either singular or plural subject-verb agreement is possible, depending on whether the speaker/writer is viewing the *majority/minority* in question as comprised of its many parts or as a single entity:

| Agreement | Example |
|-----------|---|
| plural | Most grade-three kids say they like reading, and the vast majority think they're good at it. |
| singular | Among other voters, a majority thinks that climate change is caused by people. |

8. Plural unit words of distance, money, and time (like the example in box 2 of the matrix on page 63) take the singular verb inflection when one entity is implied, but a plural verb inflection when more than one entity is encoded in the subject:

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| one entity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>distance:</i> 1,000 miles is a long distance. <i>money:</i> 2 million dollars is a lot of money. <i>time:</i> 5 years is a long time to spend on an M.A. thesis. |
| more than one entity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>distance:</i> 10 miles are to be added to this freeway next year. <i>money:</i> 2 dollars are on the table in the kitchen. <i>time:</i> 3 years (i.e., 1602, 1649, and 1687) are missing from this set of calendars for the 17th century. |

9. Arithmetical operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) take the singular because they are perceived as reflecting a single numerical entity on both sides of the equation or equal sign. For example:

addition: **One plus one** $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{is} \\ \text{equals} \end{array} \right\}$ **two.**

10. The quantifiers *all (of)*, *a lot of*, *lots of*, and *plenty of* take singular verb agreement if the subject head noun is noncount, but plural verb agreement if the subject head noun is plural:

A lot of nonsense was published about that incident.

A lot of people were present when it happened.

USE

So far, what we have discussed concerning the form of the subject-verb agreement rule and the meaningful choice of which verb to use (the reason) do not sound especially difficult. However, when it comes to use, there are complications, partly due to conflicts between prescriptive rules and actual usage. Below we discuss five such instances.¹⁴

1. Quantifiers

None. Rules conflict for *none*, and sometimes for *all*, *each*, and *every*. Many prescriptive grammars state that when used as a subject, *none* is always singular regardless of what follows in a prepositional phrase. The argument for this rule has been that *none* means *not one*. However, usage surveys give us a different picture of what native speakers are doing and thinking when they use *none*. When *none* refers to a noncount noun, the inflection is uncontroversially singular:

None of the toxic waste has escaped.

But when *none* refers to a plural noun—human or nonhuman—usage seems to be more or less equally divided between the singular and plural inflection. A check of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) found that plural forms of the verb followed *none* as often as singular forms:

None of those things are neurological.

None of the jobs have lasted for longer than 13 months.

None of the injuries was life-threatening.

None of the cases has come to trial.

Clearly, the traditional prescription that *none* is always singular is inadequate. Additional research based on analysis of tokens from current spoken and written English should be carried out to see if a more descriptively adequate rule of usage exists. In the meantime, ESL/EFL teachers must be aware of the fact that when the subject *none* refers to a plural countable noun, the plural verb inflection may well be chosen if current usage is any indication.

Although *none* is the most problematic quantifier with respect to subject-verb agreement, ESL/EFL learners also experience problems with the quantifiers *all*, *each*, and *every (one)*.

All. The prescriptive rules for subject-verb agreement with *all* are as follows: If the noun that *all* modifies is a noncount subject, then subject-verb agreement is singular:

All (of) (the) water is polluted.

If *all* modifies a countable plural subject noun, subject-verb agreement is plural:

All (of) (the) students have arrived.

A problem arises, however, when *all* is used with a collective noun subject. Theoretically, one should be able to use either singular or plural subject-verb agreement in such cases. We tested such an item with 40 native speakers of English (graduate students and professors), and the results seem to support this theoretical duality:

All of my family _____ present.
is—55%; are—43%; no response—2%

Many style books, however, admonish us not to use the preposition *of* after the quantifier *all* in our writing. We thus administered a similar item, minus the *of*, to the same group of people a week later. The results were as follows:

All my family _____ present.
is—68%; *are*—26%; *used both*—6%

Thus the presence or absence of the prepositional phrase with *of* seems to have an effect on subject-verb agreement, since in the item without *of*, our consultants favored singular agreement to a noticeably greater degree. There are clearly other factors at play though (see Peterson, 1990).

Each or Every (One). When the subject quantifier is *each* or *every (one)*, the rules are more straightforward. When the quantified subject noun is singular, there is no problem: the subject-verb agreement is always singular:

**{ Each
 Every
 Each and every } student has a textbook.**

However, when the quantified noun refers to a definite plural set, there can be problems since the quantifiers are grammatically singular, yet the set that they are modifying is notionally plural:

**Each of his examples { was
 were } out of context.**

**Every one of these athletes { runs
 run } the mile in four minutes.**

The traditional prescriptive rule maintains that singular subject-verb agreement applies in such cases because *each* and *every (one)* are functioning as grammatically singular subjects. In these cases, native speaker preference appears to closely mirror the prescriptive rule, since the same 40 consultants that reported divided usage for *all* were in agreement (93 percent or more) that the verbs in the above two sentences should be *was* and *runs*. A search of COCA also shows a preference for singular verbs with *each* and *every*:

Each of you is questioned privately.

“Every one of us is a hero in waiting,” says author Allison.

However, there were some instances of plural verbs, although they were far less frequent:

...each of these were performed six times.

...and every one of us were happy to see him again.

2. Clausal and phrasal subjects

Traditional grammars tell us that when a clause functions as a subject, the subject-verb agreement is singular—regardless of any plural noun phrases that occur as part of the subject clause or the verb phrase. For example:

That the children want friends doesn’t surprise me.

What they want is revolutions everywhere.

This rule also extends to phrasal subjects that are gerunds or infinitives because they also take singular verb agreement; however, they seem to cause fewer learning problems than clausal subjects:

Reading books is my hobby.

To err is human.

What we find, in fact, is that this rule is applied most of the time, but not always. A search of the MICASE corpus (Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English) turned up several examples where the main verb was in the plural, presumably due to the plural noun that followed it:

What we see are interpreted in gendered terms.

What we see are populations that fluctuate.

It seems that especially in spoken discourse, where speakers have to contend with time and processing constraints, this rule of subject-verb agreement is not always strictly adhered to.

3. Correlatives: The proximity principle

For the correlatives *either...or* and *neither...nor*, traditional grammarians argue for a proximity rule; that is, subject-verb agreement should occur with the subject noun nearest to the verb:

Either my sister or my brothers are going to do it.

Either my brothers or my sister is going do it.

Neither the books nor the movie was helpful.

Neither the movie nor the books were helpful.

Survey data suggest that speakers do seem to follow the proximity principle, although not uniformly, especially in the case of *neither...nor*:

Either your eyesight or your brakes _____ at fault.
was—31%; were—69% (van Shaik, 1976)

Either the professor or her assistants _____ explain every lesson
has to—33%; have to—67% (Farhady, 1977)

Neither the students nor the teacher _____ that textbook.
likes—49%; like—51% (van Shaik, 1976)

Examples from COCA generally support these questionnaire findings:

The committee found no evidence that either the book or the negotiations were mentioned at the meeting...

...neither the appointment nor the hearings were about race.

Personal pronouns pose special problems when used with full correlatives, where the rule of proximity would have us produce *either you or I am*, *neither you nor he is*, and so on. In such cases, Farhady and van Shaik found even less agreement with the proximity principle in their data than they did when correlatives involved lexical nouns:

Neither you nor he _____ able to answer the question.
was—40%; were—60% (Farhady, 1977)

Neither you nor I _____ trained for that job.
am—12%; is—15%; are—73% (van Shaik, 1976)

The immediately preceding example is especially interesting because *are* is a colloquial gap-filling substitute for *am* in some other constructions (*I'm going, too, aren't I? Aren't I lucky?*). *Am* is apparently perceived by native speakers as too limited a form for use in those correlatives where *I* is the second noun phrase constituent.

4. *There*

We devote Chapter 23 to a thorough discussion of *there* in subject position, so we won't delve too deeply into issues of its subject-verb agreement here. Suffice it to say that there are complications here as well. Traditionally, the form of the verb, typically *be* in sentences with *there* in subject position should agree with the noun phrase that follows the verb, what is called "the logical subject."

There is a leak in the kitchen sink.

There is water on the floor.

There are no plumbers available when you need one!

However, speakers appear to make two exceptions to this generalization. First, with a compound subject, they apply the proximity principle:

There is a leak in the kitchen sink and one in the bathroom.

And, in the case of the contracted singular form *there's*, it is often used for both singular and plural subjects in everyday speech:

There's no plumbers when you need one!

Crawford (2005) explains “the tendency of spoken language to use less elaboration and more contraction, combined with the processing constraints of spoken language, results in the formulaic use of contracted existential *there + be* (*there's*) without conscious reference to the prescriptive rule of agreement”(p. 59).

5. The non-intervention principle

One problem that frequently arises for both native and non-native speakers of English is identifying the true subject of the sentence. This often occurs when subjects include a head noun and a long modifying clause or phrase, especially one with a plural noun that precedes the main verb directly.

The main argument as it has been portrayed in all the news stories is...

The verb *is* agrees with the head noun *argument*, but *stories* directly precedes the main verb and could cause confusion as to which form of the *be* verb to use.

Many reference grammars make a point of emphasizing that a singular subject noun or pronoun should take a singular verb inflection regardless of what else occurs between the subject and the verb; that is, the speaker or writer should ignore all plural forms in intervening prepositional phrases and expressions such as *together with*, *along with*, *as well as*, and *not others*:

For the most part, the nonintervention principle seems to be well supported:

The major cause of highway accidents in 1976 _____ drunk drivers.
was—93%; were—7% (Farhady 1977)

Peter, along with his brothers, _____ to open a store.
plans—84%; plan—16% (van Shaik 1976)

The boy, not his parents, _____ being punished.
is—88%; are—12% (van Shaik 1976)

Neither of them was convinced by what he said. (COCA)

Conclusion

In many English sentences, subject-verb number agreement is straightforward and noncontroversial. However, it is quite clear that a number of unresolved questions remain. When a form is syntactically singular but notionally plural (or vice versa), there is a potential conflict. Agreement based on form is straightforward, but when agreement is driven by meaning or use, this gives rise to the possibility of variation among users. Here, Reid's (1991) formulation, which holds that all co-occurrences of subject noun number and of verb number are possible, though not equally frequent, helps to explain meaning-driven choices and guide the listener or reader to the intended interpretation. This is what we mean by teaching reasons rather than, or in addition to, rules. Teach students the meanings of forms, so they can see why speakers make the choices that they do.

There is also the question of appropriate use. Our advice to ESL/EFL teachers is that they be aware of the major traditional rules and also be aware of those instances where current usage seems to clearly deviate from the traditional prescription. Also, teachers should keep in mind that informal contexts permit a greater range of acceptable forms than formal contexts; therefore, flexible correction standards, which differ for formal writing than for informal writing and colloquial speech, might be in order.

Teaching Suggestions

- Form.** The copula *be* causes ESL/EFL students trouble because it is the most irregular verb in the English language. A lot of practice will have to be given to all its various forms:

| Present | | Past | |
|----------------|----------|-----------------|-----------|
| I am | we are | I was | we were |
| you are | you are | you were | you were |
| he, she, it is | they are | he, she, it was | they were |

- Have your students associate forms of the *be* verb with the appropriate subject pronouns, as in the chart. One way to do so is to have your students introduce themselves and ask for the names of others using the formulaic question “What is your name?”

Teacher: I am Mr. Simon. What is your name?

Student 1: I am Manuel. What is your name? (to S2)

Student 2: I am Elka. What is your name? (to S3)

- Then give students an opportunity to practice another form of the *be* verb and another formulaic question.

Teacher: I am from the United States. Where are you from?

Student 1: I am from Mexico. Where are you from? (to S2)

Student 2: I am from Bulgaria. Where are you from? (to S3)

Then the students can ask each other the question.

- Have the students do a chain drill, adding a name with each turn.

Student 1: I am Manuel.

Student 2: He is Manuel, and I am Elka.

Student 3: He is Manuel, she is Elka, and I am Fatimah.

- Finally, students can introduce themselves to the class.

Student 1: I am Manuel. I am from Mexico.

Student 2: I am Elka. I am from Bulgaria.

- Form.** Badalamenti and Henner-Stanchina (2007) suggest using the names of famous people from all over the world to practice the copula *be* with country of origin and nationality. For example, the teacher can give one or two examples and then provide only a name.

Arnold Schwarzenegger is from Austria. He's Austrian.

Messi is from Argentina. He's Argentinian.

- Form.** The problematic area with regular present-tense verbs other than *be* involves the third person singular form of the verb. Since the third person singular form of the verb is the only one inflected for person and number agreement in the present tense, ESL/EFL students frequently and persistently omit the necessary *-s* marker by simplifying or by

overgeneralizing the basic pattern to third person singular. Practice with the present tense should thus put a great deal of focus on the third person singular inflection and on the contrast with all other persons. The teacher can introduce a fictional character *Jack* and talk about what he *does* every day. To enhance the input, the teacher can stress the verb, making sure that the students hear the *-s* inflection.

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| He gets up at 7:00 A.M. | He runs in the park at 5:00 P.M. |
| He eats breakfast at 7:30. | He comes home at 6:00. |
| He goes to work at 8:00. | etc. |

Jack's schedule can be practiced by the class with the teacher using pictures and/or a clock with movable hands as prompts. Then students can do pairwork. The teacher writes on the board "get up," "eat breakfast," "go to school." Each member of the pair can make a sentence about his or her schedule. For example:

Maria: I get up at 7:30. I eat breakfast at 8:00. I go to work at 9:00.

Maria's partner then reports to the class:

Partner: Maria gets up at 7:30. She eats breakfast at 8:00. She goes to work at 9:00.

4. **Form.** For intermediate-level students, Wisniewska, Riggenbach, and Samuda (2007) suggest that job descriptions and names of occupations be first matched and then generated to practice the third person singular present tense.
 - a. He wears a uniform and usually travels many miles a day. He serves food and drinks, but he hardly ever prepares them for himself. He's _____.
 - b. She wears a uniform and drives many miles a day. She never serves food or drinks. She's _____.

| | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| a flight attendant | a nurse |
| a teacher | a bus driver |
| a librarian | a student |

Now students write similar descriptions for the job names that are still left.

5. **Meaning.** To practice with intermediate learners the notion that it is sometimes possible to use a plural or singular verb with a particular noun depending on how the noun is construed, give the students sentences and ask them to respond with "one" when the subject is singular and "more than one" when the subject is plural. They should also specify the entity or unit being referred to.
 - a. **Teacher:** The class is going to celebrate at the end of this term.
Students: one (class)
 - b. **Teacher:** The 20 minutes are going to pass quickly.
Students: more than one (minute)
 - c. **Teacher:** Twenty minutes is not a long time!
Students: one (time unit)
 - d. **Teacher:** The faculty are meeting after school today.
Students: more than one (faculty member)
6. **Use.** Ask your more advanced students to conduct a survey of class members regarding their preferences in how they spend their free time or some other issue that you think will interest them. The survey should be designed, conducted, and the results summarized in small groups. Each group should report to the class, using the quantifiers, fractions, and phrases such as *the majority of*, *a number of*, etc.
7. **Use.** Frodesen and Eyring (2007) suggest that teachers give students many statements and have them decide which items have verb forms that are appropriate for formal

written contexts (i.e., the traditional prescriptive rule) and which would be acceptable for informal written or spoken contexts:

- a. Neither of those political surveys are valid because the sample was not random.
- b. In conclusion, either of the textbooks reviewed above is an excellent choice for an introductory chemistry course.
- c. There's a number of errors in this report.
- d. As far as we know, none of the experiment's results has been duplicated to date.

Exercises

Test your knowledge of what has been presented.

1. *Provide an original example sentence illustrating each of the following concepts. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your example.*
 - a. copula *be*
 - b. a copular verb other than *be*
 - c. an auxiliary function of *be*
 - d. collective noun subject
 - e. noncount noun subject
 - f. third person singular present inflection
 - g. the proximity principle
 - h. the nonintervention principle
 - i. subject-verb agreement with a clausal subject
2. *What are two structural reasons for distinguishing the copula *be* from other verbs in English?*
3. *In what instances should your ESL/EFL students be aware that verbs must agree with subjects in person and number? Also, in what instances does subject-verb agreement not apply?*
4. *Name and illustrate two cases where a traditional subject-verb agreement rule is not supported by current usage.*

Test your ability to apply what you know.

5. *If your students produce the following, and they want to speak and write Standard English, what would you tell them?*
 - a. *Is you from Mexico?
 - b. *Felix go to school every day.
 - c. *I tired.
 - d. *Nora wills read the book.
 - e. *They sings in a choir.
 - f. *I don't be angry anymore.
6. *What will you say to a high-intermediate ESL/EFL student who complains to you that you correct mistakes in his compositions when he writes sentences like this one, but that he hears native speakers say things like this all the time?*

Either my roommates or my friend Bill are going to buy the refreshments.

7. *How would you present the rules for fractions and percentages to an intermediate-level high school ESL/EFL class? What contexts would you provide to help them have meaningful practice?*

8. *Some noun plurals are irregular (men, mice), and some have a change from -f (sg.) to -ves (pl.), such as wife/wives. How would you review irregular noun plurals with a low-intermediate ESL/EFL class?*
9. *If a student asks you which is correct in the following pair of sentences, how would you answer?*

(The students are disappointed that the football team is no longer undefeated.)

The majority is upset at the loss.

The majority are upset at the loss.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Other reference grammars or handbooks or online resource on style with useful descriptions of subject-verb agreement are:

- Crews, F. (1991). *A Random House handbook*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Lunsford, A. (2009). *Easy Writer guide* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martins.
- Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL). Handout on subject-verb agreement. Retrieved from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/599/01/>
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ESL texts with useful discussions and exercises for treating the copula *be* and subject-verb agreement are:

- Alexander, L. G. (1988). *Longman English grammar*. London, England: Longman.
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Endnotes

1. Verbs that are not copulas can be followed only by adverbials and/or noun phrases. They do not take adjective phrases. In colloquial utterances like “He talks funny,” *funny* is functioning adverbially (i.e., “in a funny manner”), not adjectively.
2. Participial adjectives are derived from either the *-ing* present participle (e.g., *standing, walking, sleeping*), e.g., *They lie sleeping*, or the *-en* past participle (which takes the *-ed* ending in regular verbs and a variety of endings in irregular verbs) (see Chapter 7) (e.g., *protected, forgotten, distraught*).
3. While *become, get, and turn* can take many different adjectives, the other change-of-state copulas tend to take only one or two fixed adjective constructions, such as *fall ill, come undone, grow tall/old, run wild/amok*.
4. These adverbials typically are prepositional phrases and their substitutes (e.g., *in the room, there*).
5. It derives historically from *come to be*.
6. *Turn* is unusual in that it takes articleless nouns: *He turned traitor*. It also can take a prepositional phrase, in which case the noun object may take an article: *He turned into a gentleman*.
7. Remember that the verb *be* in the present tense would take the form *am* with a first-person subject and *are* with a second-person subject.

8. What is meant by the perceptual saliency of a form is whether or not it is easy for learners to hear. Because final consonants and consonant clusters tend to be more weakly articulated in English than initial consonants or clusters, this morpheme is in fact somewhat difficult to hear.
9. Recall the regular morphological plural ending *-s* takes three different forms phonologically: /ðz/ after sibilant consonants (consonants produced with friction forced through a narrow opening): *bushes, buses, mazes, peaches, badges*; /s/ after non-sibilant voiceless consonants (consonants where vocal cords are not vibrating): *books, hats, lips*; and /z/ after voiced non-sibilant consonants and vowels (sounds where the vocal cords are vibrating): *bags, gads, ribs, eyes, toes*.
10. However, we would like to point out that Reid's system does not properly explain why sentences like these are not acceptable under any circumstances:

***The boy like candy.**

***The boys likes candy.**

Some English nouns like *boy* are more individuated and countable than others like *gang, dollar, or number*. It is less-individuated nouns that have flexibility of number and support Reid's arguments. This is an issue that we discuss further in Chapter 15. We should also note that Hudson (1999) takes exception to Reid's semantic account as well. Instead, he proposes a new feature "agreement-number," noting that the grammatical feature of "person" is really only relevant when it comes to the *be* verb.

11. In American English, there still is a strong tendency to use the singular verb inflection with a collective noun subject. In British English, plural inflections are frequently preferred.

(Am. E.) **My family is on vacation.**

(Br. E.) **My family are on holiday.**

The government is cheating us.

The government are cheating us.

However, recent experimental and corpus work has revealed that British English speakers are more likely these days to join their American counterparts and use singular verbs with collective noun subjects (Depraetere, 2003). In fact, Depraetere goes so far as to advise teachers to tell their students that a singular verb is the default form, unless there are clear semantic or pragmatic factors that favor the use of a plural one.

Some collective nouns (i.e., *the police*, and those formed from adjectives that describe people: *the rich, the young, the privileged*) require a plural verb:

The police are looking for that man.

The rich are getting richer all the time!

Indeed, Bock, Cutler, Eberhard, Butterfield, Cooper Cutting, and Humphreys (2006) argue that the question of whether to use a singular or plural verb is really decided at the lexical level, not at a categorical level. For instance, British English speakers prefer the plural for the collective noun *staff*, and American English speakers favor the plural for *faculty*. According to them, therefore, it is more a matter of usage, not rule or reason.

12. However, as Reid (1991) points out, authentic counterexamples do exist for this heuristic—especially if adjectivals that semantically support the opposite number interpretation are modifying the noun number so as to make "(the) number (of)" reflect more than one entity or make "(a) number (of)" reflect a single entity:

... the increased number of cancers were occurring at radiation exposure levels well below the official limit. . . . (p. 219)

A smaller number of steps suggests a growing ability to organize. (p. 282)

13. We are grateful to Claire Chik for the substance of the treatment of this section. Her examples come from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).
14. We thank Steffi Wulff for these examples from COCA.

Word Order and the Phrase Structure Rules for the Subject of a Sentence

Introduction

There are a few grammatical resources that languages of the world use. Two of them are the morphological inflections and function words that we looked at in Chapter 2. Another resource is word order or syntax. Word order is very important in English. As you have already seen, there are only eight inflectional morphemes, so English uses word order to signal grammatical relations where other languages rely on morphemes. In the chapters before this one, we have looked at structures that are below the level of the sentence. In later chapters, we will be examining the structure above the level of the sentence. In this chapter, we will focus on the middle level—the basic syntax of an English sentence, making explicit its property of linearity. Then, we will formulate some basic rules of English word order, called *phrase structure rules*. They show how a sentence can be broken down into categories and their constituent parts. The category that we feature in this chapter is the noun phrase. In addition to the grammatical properties of linearity and categorality, we also introduce the property of hierarchy. The property of hierarchy accounts for the fact that the categories themselves form a hierarchy from the level of sentence down to the level of the smallest constituent, which can not be broken down further. An understanding of these properties of English sentences will add to your understanding of grammar and to your professional knowledge base as an ESL/EFL teacher.

Word Order (Linearity)

In English, word order within sentences is less flexible than it is in many other languages, or than it was in English 1,000 years ago. One reason for this is that English has lost most of its original Germanic system of inflections. Without recourse to this full range of inflections to mark subjects (and objects of various kinds), English came to rely on linear word order to distinguish subjects from objects. English word order is far from fixed, but there is enough regularity that we can say, on the basis of frequency, that the basic underlying word order for a declarative written sentence is **Subject-Verb-Object**. From a comparative typology point of view, then, we say that English is an S-V-O language, like Spanish, French, and many other languages. However, a major difference exists between English and French, on the one hand, and Spanish, on the other: both English and French require that a subject appear in all but a

certain type of sentence, whereas Spanish does not have this requirement for sentences with pronominal subjects. For example:

I speak English. Je parle français. (Yo) hablo español.
(‘I speak French.’) (‘I speak Spanish.’)

In fact the most frequent version of this Spanish sentence omits the first person subject pronoun, *yo*, and therefore, Spanish is typologically a “pro-drop language” because subject pronouns can be dropped. Spanish speakers can infer the subject due to the inflections on the verb—in this case, the “o” on the verb *hablo* signals that the subject is first person singular *Yo* (“I”). Spanish speakers can drop pronominal subjects because Spanish has a rich system of verb inflections that unambiguously indicate the person and number of the subject.¹

Most Spanish speakers learning English don’t forget to use the subject with English sentences, but it is not unusual for beginners to leave off subjects of certain English sentences when making statements, such as “is raining.” We will have more to say about such constructions later on (in Chapter 23).

As we have said, there is a certain type of English sentence without an expressed subject, too. This is the case for imperative sentences, where we understand from the context who is issuing a command and who is being commanded:

Stop that racket!

Such sentences are said to have an “understood *you*” as their subjects. In addition, in spoken language, where one can easily infer the subject, it is sometimes elided, especially when the subject is “I” or “it” (Nariyama, 2004). Subject ellipsis occurs when the subject is recoverable in the context:

Amanda: (I) saw Rachel yesterday. I brought her flowers, and we had a chat.

Isabel: (It) clearly did her a lot of good.

Not all English sentences require objects either. Transitive verbs take objects. Sentences with intransitive verbs, like *arrive* or *sleep*, do not:

She arrived while I was sleeping.

If you have studied only languages like English, Spanish, and French, you might assume that all languages more or less follow S-V-O word order; in fact, several languages unrelated to these three, such as Cantonese, Bulgarian, Swahili, and colloquial Egyptian Arabic, are also S-V-O languages.²

However, there are other typologies as well. S-O-V and V-S-O are two common alternatives to S-V-O. Some major languages that follow the S-O-V pattern are Japanese, Korean, Turkish, and Farsi (Persian). Some languages that use the V-S-O pattern are Malayo-Polynesian languages such as Indonesian and Tagalog, the classical versions of Semitic languages such as Hebrew and Arabic, and Celtic languages like Irish, Welsh, and Breton. Linguists have also identified a few languages that adhere to the other sequences. Hixkaryana, a Carib language spoken in Brazil, is said to be OVS, and Kabardian, a language spoken in the Caucasus, is OSV. As for a VOS language, Malagasy, spoken in Madagascar, is an example. You may have observed from this distribution of languages, that it is far more common among world languages for the S to precede the O (Greenberg, 1966).

In addition to these sentence-level word order differences, there also are cross-linguistic differences in word order at the phrasal level, depending on whether the object noun precedes or follows the verb (Jacobs, 1995, pp. 36 ff.). Jacobs points out that in languages like English, where the verb precedes the object, auxiliary verbs normally precede verbs, prepositions precede their objects, and relative clauses follow the nouns they modify. In contrast, in languages like Japanese and Korean, where objects precede verbs, auxiliary verbs normally follow main verbs (in the form of inflections), **postpositions** (as compared with **prepositions**)

follow their objects, and relative clauses precede the nouns they modify. Such phrase-level differences can cause problems for learners; we discuss them further in the following chapters of this book where relevant.

You may have noticed that certain common languages are not on our lists. This is because their word order patterns are more varied. For example, in German and Dutch, main clauses are SVO, but in subordinate clauses, the verb is final, and therefore word order in subordinate clauses is SOV. Russian makes a distinction between the word order of transitive clauses, which is SVO, and that of intransitive clauses, which is either SV or VS.

Even in English, the word order is not invariant. You may have also noticed that we have been somewhat cautious in saying that the main word orders exist for *written declarative sentences that are frequently occurring*. Spoken utterances are a different matter. For instance, object-fronting or topicalization of objects occurs in oral discourse:

Michelle: I have just watched the Super Bowl. (SVO)

Eve: That I would never watch. (OSV)

Topicalization takes place when a speaker puts the topic or focus at the beginning of a sentence. Usually, topicalization involves a stress or intonation change as well:

I have not seen that.

That I have not seen.

It is also possible to move the object to initial position for emphasis:

Pauline: I love coffee. (SVO)

Jennifer: What about tea?

Pauline: Tea I don't like. (OSV, rather than *I don't like tea*, SVO)

But when OSV is the syntax used in English, we recognize that it is not typical. Linguists call such sentences “marked” because they convey an additional nuance of meaning or pragmatic focus. Throughout this book, we will encounter the distinction between canonical unmarked structures and marked structures. The point is that grammar is a meaning-making resource, not a linguistic straitjacket; marked alternatives offer other ways to express meaning.

Phrase Structure (Categorality and Hierarchy)

For the remainder of this chapter, we will be dealing with unmarked sentences, specifically their syntax. Before we do so, however, there is one additional matter to take up. Sentences are not only made up of words in a certain (linear) order. They have other properties as well. For instance, if you were asked to divide the following sentence into its two main parts, where would you draw the line?

Emmylou Harris sings country music.

Most people asked this question would draw the line after *Emmylou Harris* and before *sings*. This basic division corresponds to the two major constituents of a sentence: the subject and the predicate:

Emmylou Harris / sings country music.

The point is that sentences are structured strings of words, and it is not just a matter of cleaving a sentence in two arbitrarily. We also have the sense that the words on either side of the line go together. In other words, they form clusters. This illustrates another property of syntax, which is the property of categorality. Word clusters form categories. *Emmylou Harris*

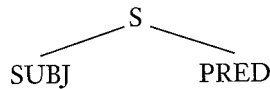
fits the subject category and *sings country music* is categorized as the predicate of the sentence. The categories in a sentence are in a hierarchical relationship. The subject and predicate combine at a lower level to make up a sentence at a higher level.

A way to depict all that we have said so far (i.e., that sentences exhibit linearity, categorality, and hierarchy) is to write phrase structure rules, which capture these properties.³

The first phrase structure rule illustrates all three of these properties:

S → SUBJ PRED

It tells us that a sentence S is made up of two categories—a subject SUBJ, followed by a predicate PRED, all capitalized because they are major constituents of a sentence. It also tells us that there is a hierarchy to a sentence, although the hierarchy may be clearer if we use another linguistic convention, namely, a tree:



Some people like grammar trees; others don't. Needless to say, we find them very useful in depicting the composition of a sentence. We don't necessarily recommend that you use trees with your students, although some teachers do. Still, learning to draw trees will help you to identify the categories in an English sentence and their hierarchical relationships. Once you have identified a category, you can use the identification to consult linguistic sources, such as reference grammars, to learn more. Thus, we use trees to parse sentences—to show you what they are made up of and what the relationships among the parts are.

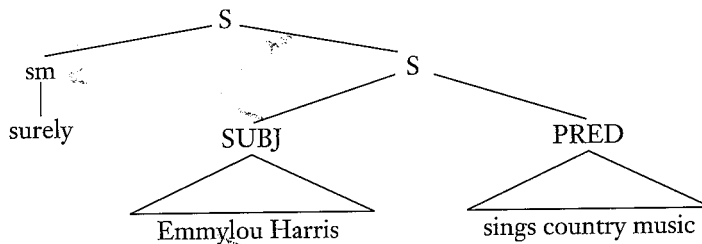
We haven't quite finished with this rule though. It is possible for an English sentence to be preceded by a sentence modifier (sm) or even more than one, which is indicated with a superscript "n" in our expanded rule below. For now, we will limit the term *sentence modifier* to words like *perhaps* and *surely*. These are sentential adverbs—adverbs that modify an entire sentence. Here is an example of a sentence with a sentence modifier:

Surely, Emmylou Harris sings country music.

One quality that linguists value highly is parsimony—being able to use the fewest possible rules to account for the most data; here, the structure of grammatical sentences in English. In order to be parsimonious (what linguists call "elegant"), we can write one rule that will take care of both of our example sentences so far. This is our first phrase structure rule:

1. **S → {smS
SUBJ PRED}**

Here is what the second sentence looks like as a tree:



The triangles under SUBJ and PRED indicate that we have not yet completed our analysis of these constituents and must apply additional rules to complete the task. As you may have noted, phrase structure rule are recursive. This means that they, or parts of them, can

be used repeatedly. We used the top half of the rule to draw the first *S*, and then returned to the bottom half to draw the second *S*. We will also return to the subject of the sentence in the next rule, in order to define what a subject of an English sentence can be made of. In other words, we will go to a lower level in our hierarchy.

Another term for what we are doing is *immediate constituent analysis*. In this sort of analysis, a sentence is divided into major divisions, or *immediate constituents*. These constituents are in turn divided into further immediate constituents, and this process continues until irreducible constituents are reached; i.e., until each constituent consists of only a word or meaningful part of a word. When our phrase structure rules are complete, we will be able to account for each constituent in this way.

Noun Phrases

The second phrase structure rule tells us that the SUBJ is an NP (or noun phrase); in our example, it's *Emmylou Harris*:

2. SUBJ → NP

However, a proper noun, such as *Emmylou Harris*, is a rather simple NP. NPs can be more complicated. Rule 3 makes this point clear. It is a much longer rule than the first two rules, but with it, we should be able to spell out all of the parts of an NP in English:

3. NP → { (det³) (APⁿ)N (-pl) (PrepP) } pro

Let us look more closely at this rule.

The first symbol you will see is *det*, which is an abbreviation for determiner. A determiner tells you which noun is being talked about. The superscript 3 that follows *det* simply means that there can be up to three determiners in an English noun phrase. For instance,

- 1 determiner—**the singer**
- 2 determiners—**the other singer**
- 3 determiners—**all the other singers**

It is also possible for the determiner slot to be filled by a possessive NP, so that the following sentence has two possessive determiners, *their* and *neighbor's*:

Their neighbor's house has finally been painted.

We will have much more to say about determiners in Chapter 16.

The next abbreviation is *AP*, for adjective phrase. Note the superscript *n* after *AP* tells us that a NP can have more than one adjective phrase, hypothetically many more (to the *n*th degree). We will discuss the *AP* rule a while later, but for now, it is enough to know that an *AP* is minimally made up of an adjective, *famous*, in the following example:

all the other famous

The noun, in our rule represented as *N*, is the most important part of the NP. We show that the other elements in the rule are not essential by putting parentheses around them. Of course, for any given sentence, the elements in parentheses may be present. However, our goal is to write general rules to be able to describe possible sentences in English. Using parentheses is a convention for indicating that the elements they enclose are syntactically optional. Thus, since the noun is the only element in our rule that is not in parentheses, we know that NP must at least have a noun. An example of an NP with only a noun is a person's name (*Emmylou Harris*, for instance). Another way of saying that a noun is essential to an NP is to say that the "head" of an NP is a noun.

Of course, countable nouns can be made plural, which is what the plural marker (-pl) tells us. If the noun in a given NP is plural, then the determiner also must be marked for plurality. In other words, as we saw in Chapter 3, there must be agreement between a determiner and the noun that it modifies. Also, in our rule, the “pl” has a dash before it. The dash is a convention for showing that -pl needs to be attached to some other word; in other words, it is a bound morpheme.

all the other famous singers

***all the other famous singer**

Of course, we are not claiming that speakers compose or process a sentence from “left to right.” Nevertheless, it is a fact, as we have seen in Chapter 3 on lexicogrammar, that selection of one item in a sentence often constrains another. Thus, students can be taught to anticipate what is to come. For example, if a sentence begins with *the*, students will learn that a noun will follow soon thereafter.

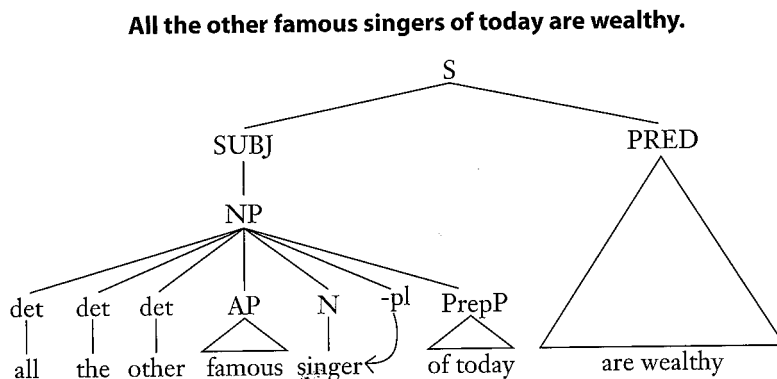
The final part of the top row of the rule tells us that a noun can optionally be followed by a prepositional phrase (PrepP):

all the other famous singers of today

Minimally, then, an NP is an uninflected lexical noun such as *rice*, *book*, or *Emmylou*. Optionally, it can be expanded in any number of ways. Here are some examples:

- As a noun with up to three determiners: **all his other memories**
- As a noun with a determiner and an adjective: **a clear sky**
- As a noun with a plural inflection: **books** (the arrow in the tree below shows us that the plural inflection attaches to the noun that precedes it)
- As a noun with a determiner and a following prepositional phrase: **a man of honor**
- As a noun with various combinations of the above options: **the famous city of New York, all the old books**

Here is a tree with a full—very full—NP:



The curly brackets in rule 3 tells us that there is an alternative form for an NP, which is that an NP can simply be realized as a pronoun (pro):

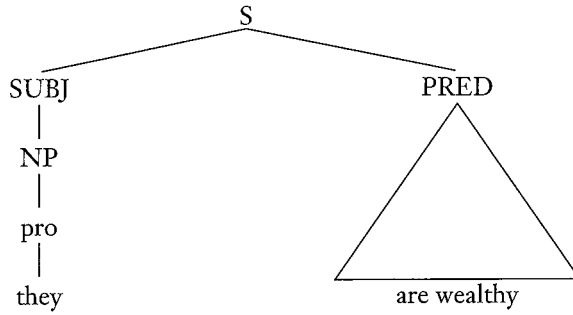
all the other famous singers of today = they

the city of New York = it

a man of honor = he

Such examples make us realize that the definition of a pronoun as a noun substitute is false. A pronoun does not substitute for a noun; it substitutes for a noun phrase:

They are wealthy.



One other point that should be made before we move on is that it is possible for a noun to be modified by another noun. For example:

a stone wall

the horse stable

We will discuss this double noun structure in our chapter on adjectives. For now, let us take up two more rules, so that we can completely account for basic noun phrases:

Adjective Phrases

Rule 4 allows us to define any adjective phrase (AP) as minimally containing an adjective (ADJ), which we abbreviate with capital letters because it is a major part of speech:

4. AP → (ADVⁿ)ADJ (PrepP)

The term ADV stands for an adverb, which the parentheses show is an optional part of an AP, and the superscript *n* captures the fact that multiple adverbs can modify an adjective. An adverb can modify an adjective to indicate any of the following:

manner: **his quietly confident demeanor**

duration: **his permanently sullen expression**

degree: **an extremely valuable collection**

condition: **the otherwise preferable course of action**

location: **his internationally famous daughter**

time: **their recently aggressive behavior**

frequency: **her sometimes harsh criticisms**

and many others (R. Huddleston, personal communication).

Sometimes the same adverb is repeated, which is referred to as *reduplication*, and sometimes different adverbs are selected:

very, very interesting news

ADV ADV ADJ N

really very nice clothes

ADV ADV ADJ N

Rule 3 also allows for multiple APs to occur before head nouns (e.g., *the big old yellow bus*). The ordering of these adjectives is discussed in some detail in Chapter 20. Of course, they need not be single-word adjectives: entire APs can be strung together, too:

very amusing, almost hilarious jokes

Adverbs don't only modify adjectives, however. They can also modify other adverbs, as in the following where *almost* modifies the adverb *always*.

very amusing, almost always hilarious jokes

We will have to postpone drawing a tree for such sentences until the next chapter, where we discuss adverb phrases. There, too, we will take up adverbs in their most well known role (i.e., where they modify verbs).

The optional prepositional phrase in rule 4 occurs most often with adjective phrases generated in the predicate—a category we discuss in the following chapter; however, this type of expansion does occasionally occur before the head noun in noun phrases and is usually represented orthographically as a hyphenated complex adjective when it does occur:

My good-for-nothing cousin
 det ADJ PrepP N

Word order differences at the phrasal level can cause difficulties, at least for beginners. For example, in an English NP, the adjective typically comes before the noun, whereas in Romance languages, it generally follows the noun. Teachers need to be ready to help students with word order in phrases as well.

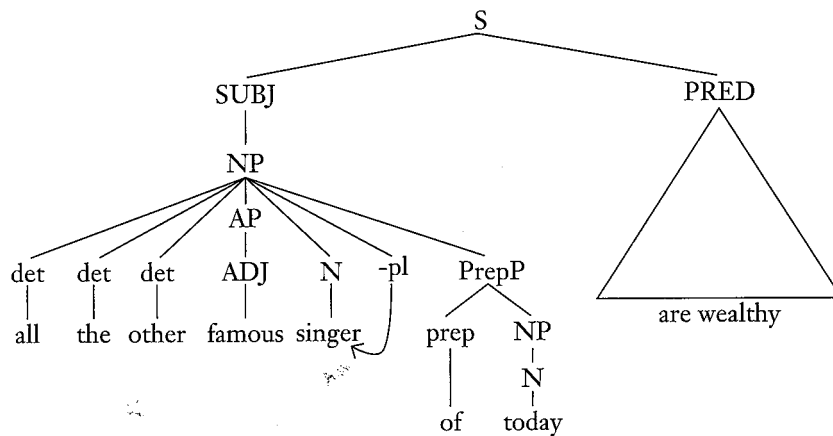
Prepositional Phrases

Rule 5 simply expands prepositional phrases as prepositions followed by noun phrases:

5. PrepP → prep NP

Since NP (noun phrase) has already been expanded in rule 3, we would recursively go back and apply our earlier rule for NP expansion whenever we have a prepositional phrase. With the addition of rules 4 and 5, we can diagram our sentence more fully:

All the other famous singers of today are wealthy.



One word of caution, though, is that the optional prepositional phrase in rule 3 accounts for those prepositional phrases that cannot have a predicate relationship with the head noun (e.g., *a man of honor*, *the city of Chicago*, *two pounds of sugar*). In other words, we cannot paraphrase such NP + PrepP combinations with an intervening *be* copula: **a man is of honor*; **the city is of Chicago*. This contrasts with those prepositional phrases that are semantically predicative, such as *the flowers in the vase* (= *the flowers are in the vase*), *the books on the table* (= *the books are on the table*). They have another source, which we discuss later in this book.

We will also come to see that prepositional phrases, like adverbs, are an important category in English. Besides following nouns and adjectives, they can occur in several other places. Prepositions signal relationships, which make up for the loss of English inflections on nouns, a point that we illustrate throughout this book.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have taken up several important grammatical concepts: linear word order or syntax; categorality, or how constituents of sentences go together to form categories; and hierarchy, or how smaller categories comprise larger categories. We have begun to write rules that capture these three qualities. We have also introduced grammar trees—effective parsing devices that make syntactic hierarchies especially clear.

All together, we will introduce fifteen basic phrase structure rules. In this chapter, we have introduced the first five, which tell us what a sentence, a subject, an NP, an AP, and a PrepP are comprised of. In the next chapter, we will discuss the remaining ten basic rules when we examine the structure of the predicate in English.

Teaching Suggestions

- 1. Form.** For beginning-level students, it might be useful to do some sentence unscrambling, especially if their first languages have a different word order typology. Stress the basic S-V-O word order in English, giving a scrambled sentence, such as the following, to each pair of students (each major constituent group is on a separate slip of paper, and the items are paper-clipped together).
 - a. pizza a delicious we ate
 - b. great had we party a
 - c. our English studies class
 - d. sells Simon newspapers
 - e. a Alex motorcycle rides

Each pair of students unscrambles its sentence and writes it down and then passes the rescrambled sentence to the next pair until all the students have had practice with unscrambling each sentence. Then, students can compare their sentences to confirm or correct their work.

- 2. Use.** Give students a written version of a conversation that you have made up. Here are two examples. Have them work in small groups to make the underlined sentences complete, in an unmarked (i.e., written) order.

A: Watch out. A car is coming.

B: Didn't see it. Thank you.

A: Say, do you want to see a movie?

B: The one that won the Academy Award? No. That I have already seen.

A: I have, too. But it is so good. I want to see it again.

3. **Meaning/Use.** Ask your students what word is followed by order another language they speak. Then, ask them to think about occasions when that word order isn't followed. Remember the questions in the pie chart on page 4. What special meaning or use does the unusual word order convey?
4. **Form.** Another grammatical point introduced in this chapter is the agreement required between certain determiners and the number of the noun that follows them. Thus, the sequences below on the left are acceptable, while the sequences on the right are not:

| | |
|------------|------------|
| this rod | *these rod |
| these rods | *this rods |
| that rod | *those rod |
| those rods | *that rods |

The Cuisenaire rods of various lengths and colors, a tool used in the Silent Way approach (see Gattegno, 1976), provide an excellent device for teaching these agreement patterns once all the colors have been learned.

Step 1: The teacher (holding the rods, one in one hand, two in the other) says:

This rod is yellow. These (rods) are red.

N.B. *These* can either be a determiner, in which case *rods* is used, or a pronoun, in which case *rods* is not used.

Students (picking up the rods, practice using all colors until the agreement pattern is established) say:

This rod is blue. These (rods) are black. This rod is white. These (rods) are green.

Step 2: The teacher asks:

Teacher: What color is this rod?

Student: It's yellow.

Teacher: Yes, it's a yellow rod.

Students manipulate rods and practice with each other until they learn the question and the statements with the adjective before noun pattern. The same thing can then be done for the plural.

Teacher: What color are these rods?

Student: They're red.

Teacher: Yes, they're red rods.

Step 3: Students manipulate rods and structures (numbers and distance) in any combination or sequence they wish and communicate with each other in pairs or small groups using these patterns.

5. **Form.** Begin a sentence with "the." Ask your students to predict what type of word comes next and to give an example and to continue in this fashion until a whole sentence is constructed.

Exercises

Since we feel that it is often more important for you to provide your students with good examples than with verbal definitions, we ask you to do exercises like the first one below throughout the text.

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide an original example sentence illustrating each of the following concepts. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your example:
 - a. noun phrase
 - b. prepositional phrase
 - c. subject
 - d. predicate
 - e. adjective phrase
 - f. adverb modifying adjective
 - g. singular determiner
 - h. plural determiner
2. Draw partially specified tree diagrams for the sentence modifiers and subjects in the following sentences, using the phrase structure rules given in this chapter:
 - a. The girls whispered.
 - b. Fortunately, his two brothers worked very quickly.
 - c. Surely, next Monday is a holiday.
 - d. The very young child cried.
 - e. The Medal of Freedom is the highest honor.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

3. If your students produce the following, what rules of Standard English have they not followed?
 - a. *The ink black stained his shirt.
 - b. *John ran for shelter because was raining.
 - c. *Those woman are striking for peace.
4. Distinguish between the following pairs by saying which is marked and which is unmarked, and, with the marked order, say what might be the circumstances in which it is used.
 - a. My name is Alison. Alison is my name.
 - b. Coffee I drink, but tea, I don't. I drink coffee, but I don't drink tea.
 - c. I live in a yellow house. I live in a house yellow like the sun.
5. Using these three words, illustrate all possible word order typologies. Say which typology (e.g., SOV) each order illustrates.

chocolate likes everyone

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Other versions of the phrase structure rules or trees for English can be found in the following sources:

- Burton-Roberts, N. (1997). *Analysing sentences: An introduction to English syntax* (2nd ed.). Essex, England: Pearson Education.
- Carnie, A. (2002). *Syntax: A generative introduction*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Haegeman, L. (1994). *Introduction to government and binding theory* (2nd ed.). Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Rutherford, W. (1998). *A workbook in the structure of English*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Thomas, L. (1993). *Beginning syntax*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

For more information on word order typologies, consult:

- Croft, W. (1995). Modern syntactic typology. In M. Shibatani & T. Bynon (Eds.), *Approaches to language typology* (pp. 85–143). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
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Endnotes

1. Chinese and Japanese are also pro-drop languages, but they do not have a rich system of agreement as Spanish, Italian, and Greek do. Neeleman and Szendrői (2005) argue that it is the morphological characteristics of the pronoun that determine whether pro-drop is allowed.
2. Recall that in the previous chapter, we distinguished subject-prominent languages from topic-prominent languages. For the purposes of the very gross word-order differences we describe here, subject and topic can be considered roughly equivalent notions.
3. At times, we may add more categories than is done in formal linguistics to draw on what our readers know about traditional grammar. Such is the case with the categories *subject* and *predicate*, which are really grammatical functions more than forms. At other times, we provide less detail than a formal linguistic grammar might. Our goal, as you will recall, is to provide the best possible pedagogical grammar for teachers and students of English.

More Phrase Structure Rules: The Predicate of a Sentence

Introduction

The preceding chapter introduced five rules that specified word order in sentences and subjects in English. In this chapter, we will turn our attention to the ten phrase structure rules for the form of the predicate. The core elements of the predicate are auxiliary elements (AUX) and verb phrases (VP). In addition to these, we also consider adverbials in English. One pedagogical issue having to do with form related to adverbials is their sequence when there is more than one. Not knowing the correct order of adverbials leads ESL/EFL students to say and write sentences such as **He drove his daughter yesterday to school*. As we said in the previous chapter, the phrase structure rules deal with form. We will take up the meaning and use of these structures in Chapters 7–9.

The Auxiliary

The auxiliary in English is especially important. It contains information about tense and the possible auxiliary verbs that can be used in an English sentence. As we saw in the last chapter, in SVO languages, auxiliary verbs tend to come before main verbs in sentences. To illustrate this, we need another phrase structure rule, rule 6, which expands the predicate:

6. PRED → AUX VP (ADVLⁿ)

ADVL stands for adverbial, and the superscript n tells us that more than one of them can occur in a sentence. Remember that the parentheses indicate that an adverbial is optional in an English sentence. There are several kinds of adverbials, which we will enumerate later in this chapter. For now, we will follow our usual course of action and turn to defining the elements in our rule, moving from left to right. To do so, here is rule 7:

$$7. \text{AUX} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{T} \\ \text{M} \\ \text{-imper} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ (\text{pm}) (\text{perf}) (\text{prog}) \right\}$$

This rule tells us that every English sentence must have either a verb tense (T) or a modal verb (M), such as *can*, *must*, *will*. A sentence can then optionally have a phrasal modal (pm) (e.g., *be able to*, *have to*, *be going to*), perfect aspect (perf), and/or progressive aspect (prog) (see below). Alternatively, the auxiliary can consist only of a marker (-imper) for an imperative sentence. Imperatives are tenseless in English. They are discussed in Chapter 12, so we will not say anything more about them at this point.

Rule 8 tells us that there are two tenses in English: present and past. The curly brackets tell us that for any given sentence, we must choose between the two:

8. T → {
 -pres
 -past}

It may seem odd to say that there are only two tenses because English speakers can certainly talk about the future. However, we do so by using alternative means, such as modal verbs (e.g., *I will go tomorrow*) and phrasal modals (e.g., *He's going to go the next day*). Tense, then, refers to inflections on the verb. Tense always inflects the next verb in the string, be it an auxiliary verb or a main verb.

If we exclude the irregular verb *be* for the moment, the past tense may be realized through either the regular inflection *ed*:

We walk + ed to school. (walk)

or other irregular vowel and consonant changes:

We ate lunch. (eat) We bought some books. (buy)

The present tense is explicitly marked only in the case of third person singular subject nouns:

He walk + s to school.

It is expressed implicitly with a lack of marking for all other subjects:

| | | |
|------|---|-------------------|
| I | } | walk Ø to school. |
| You | | |
| They | | |
| We | | |

As we saw in Chapter 4, the verb *be* is more highly inflected than other verbs in English and can express the present through three forms: *am, is, are*, and the past through two forms: *was, were*.

Skipping over modals and phrasal modals for the moment, we see that English has two optional structural markers of aspect: the perfect (perf) and the progressive (prog). We will have much more to say about aspect in the next chapter, but for now, you can think of *aspect* as giving information about completion or duration of an event. For example:

with perf: **James has taken Linguistics 101.** (suggests that the course is completed)

with prog: **James is taking Linguistics 101.** (suggests that the course is ongoing)

Here are the rules for these aspects:

9. perf → have...-en

10. prog → be...-ing

What we need to remember about the perfect and progressive aspects is that the auxiliary verb and the inflection are discontinuous—a verb comes between the *have* and *-en* or *be* and *-ing*. This is indicated by the three dots in the phrase structure rules. The inflection attaches to the verb that follows it. For example:

I have eat -en lunch.

[have...-en (perfect aspect)]

The *-en* is a symbol for the past participle. Past participles in English are not always formed with *en*, as the following examples show:

| | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|---|
| | <i>Vowel alternations</i> | <i>Look the same as the past tense form</i> |
| -en | | |
| written | sung | learned |
| eaten | drunk | read |
| seen | swum | taught |

Fortunately, the symbol for the present participle form of the verb, *-ing*, is used consistently. In our example, *walking* is the present participle of the verb *to walk*:

I am walk -ing to school.

[**be...-ing** (progressive aspect)]

Using rules 7–10, let's describe the auxiliary in the following sentences:

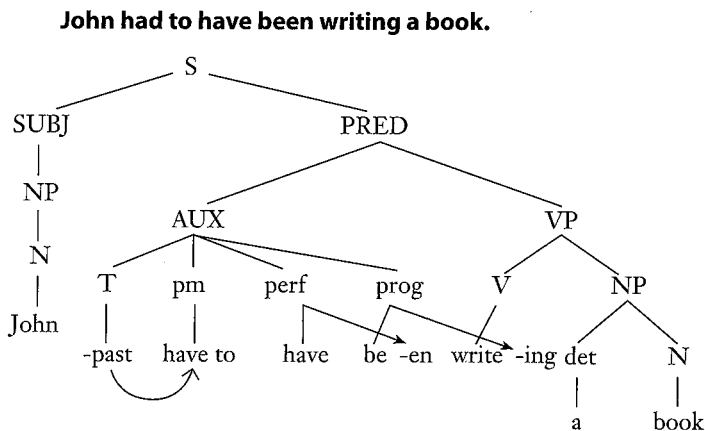
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. John wrote a book. | 5. John is going to write a book. |
| 2. John should write a book. | 6. Write a book. |
| 3. John has written a book. | 7. John will have to write a book. |
| 4. John is writing a book. | 8. John had to have been writing a book. |

If we consider the auxiliary (AUX) as everything in the predicate but the verb phrase and consider the verb phrase in its uninflected base form (*write a book*), we see that the auxiliary + the verb phrase in each of the sentences above yields the following forms:

1. past tense = **wrote a book**
2. modal *should* = **should write a book**
3. pres tense + perfect *have...-en* = **has written a book**
4. pres tense + progressive *be...-ing* = **is writing a book**
5. pres tense + phrasal modal *be going to* = **is going to write a book**
6. imper = **write a book**
7. modal *will* + phrasal modal *have to* = **will have to write a book**
8. past tense + phrasal modal *have to* + perfect *have...-en* + progressive *be...-ing*
= **had to have been writing a book**

It should be clear from these examples that tense is carried by the next verb in the sequence—either the first auxiliary verb, or if there is no auxiliary verb, then the main verb, as in sentence 1 above.

Here is how sentence 8 looks in tree form:



Perhaps you can appreciate a bit more why we said that the auxiliary was very important in English. It indicates tense, modality, aspect, and the morphological complexity of verb forms. Later, we will see that it also carries mood (the imperative is one example) and voice (the passive is an example).

The Verb Phrase

Leaving the auxiliary elements aside for the moment, we also know that English verb phrases can be complicated. Consider the following sentences:

1. John is a teacher.
2. Alice is very intelligent.
3. Gaby is allergic to cats.
4. The students are in the room.
5. Steve snores.
6. Judy studies mathematics.
7. He gave the money to Sally.
8. He gave Sally the money.

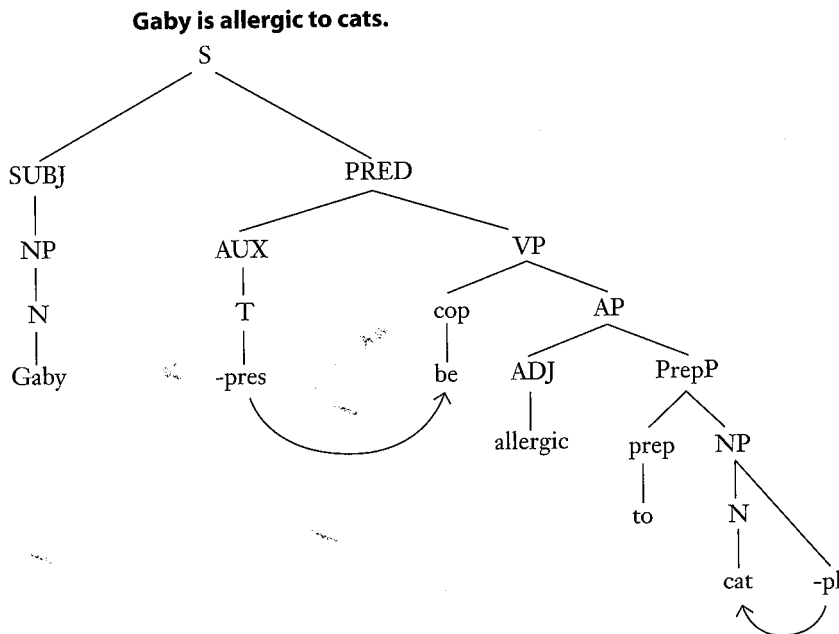
A phrase structure rule that would allow us to account for all such structural possibilities is rule 11, expanding the verb phrase (VP). *Cop* is an abbreviation for copular verb, which we discussed in Chapter 4. *V* represents a main verb other than a copula. The other representations should seem somewhat familiar to you by now, with the exception of NP', which we explain below:

$$11. VP \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{cop} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{NP} \\ \text{AP} \\ \text{PrepP} \end{array} \right\} \\ \text{V} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} (\text{NP}^2) (\text{PrepP}) \\ (\text{NP}') \end{array} \right\} \end{array} \right\}$$

We apply rule 11 to the eight sentences above as follows:

1. VP → cop NP
2. VP → cop AP
3. VP → cop AP
4. VP → cop PrepP
5. VP → V
6. VP → V NP
7. VP → V NP PrepP
8. VP → V NP NP

Here is the tree diagram for sentence 3, *Gaby is allergic to cats*. The noun inflection, the plural, moves to the left to attach to the noun. The tree helps us to see the hierarchy among the constituents:



At this point, we need to discuss one further VP option: an NP'. NP' is our symbol for an NP in the predicate directly followed by another NP, adjective, or prepositional phrase. Consider the following examples:

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|---|
| | <i>Direct object</i> | <i>Object predicates/ complements</i> |
| 1. We elected | Sam | treasurer. |
| 2. Lola considers | Forrest | inept. |
| 3. Sarah placed | the book | on the table. |

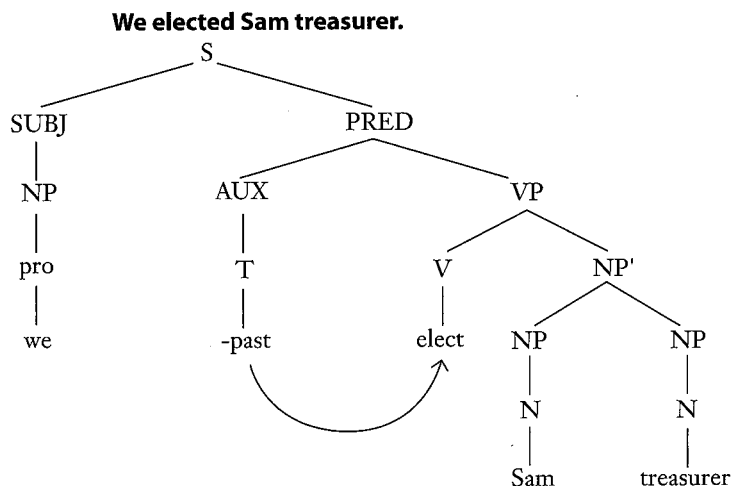
The constituents following the direct object in these three sentences are the same constituents that can follow a copular verb; however, when they directly follow a copular verb, they refer back to the subject NP (e.g., *Sam is the treasurer*), and they are called *subject predicates* or *subject complements*. When they refer to an object, as they do in sentences 1–3, in traditional grammar they are called, *object predicates* or *object complements*, or, sometimes these days *small clauses*, because they predicate something with respect to the object noun phrase, but “small” because they lack a verb.

1. **Sam (is) treasurer.**
2. **Forrest (is) inept.**
3. **The book (is) on the table.**

These sentences are admittedly not very common, but to account for them, we need one further rule:

$$12. NP' \rightarrow NP \left\{ \begin{array}{l} NP \\ AP \\ PrepP \end{array} \right\}$$

Rule 12 allows us to account for sentences like the three sentences above with object predicates. Below, we diagram the first such sentence as an example:



We have now discussed various NPs that make up an English sentence. We haven't given them all names yet. This would be a good time to do so.

The first NP we encountered was the subject:

Subject NP

The hospital is across the street.

The subject NP can be followed by an NP object of a preposition within the subject phrase; e.g., “The city of New York is called “the Big Apple.”

In contrast to the noun phrases under the subject node¹ (SUBJ), which function only as subjects or as objects of prepositions, under the predicate node (PRED), NPs can function as objects or predicates. They function as three types of objects:

Object NPs

direct objects (what receives the action of the verb): **Jim read a book.**

indirect objects (to whom or for whom the action of the verb applies): **She gave me a book.**

object of prepositions (noun phrases following prepositions): **Sam lives in a big house.**

They also function as two types of predicates:

Predicate NPs

Noun phrases function as predicates of subjects when they occur after a copular verb. These are referred to as *subject predicates* or *subject complements*:

subject predicate: **Mark is a teacher.**

And, as we have just seen, they can function as predicates of objects in small clauses, in which they are called *object predicates* or *object complements*:

object predicate: **We elected Sam treasurer.**

Adverbials

You may be happy to learn that we are about to discuss the last part of the rule for expanding the predicate, the adverbial. To do so, we need three more (these are the last for now, we promise) phrase structure rules:

$$13. \text{ADVL} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{AdvCl} \\ \text{AdvP} \\ \text{PrepP} \end{array} \right\}$$

Rule 13 provides us with three syntactic possibilities for each sentence-final adverbial: an adverb clause, an adverb phrase, and a prepositional phrase.

An example of each structural possibility follows:

AdvCl: **The boys left before their father could find them.**

AdvP: **The boys left very quickly.**

PrepP: **The boys ran out the door.**

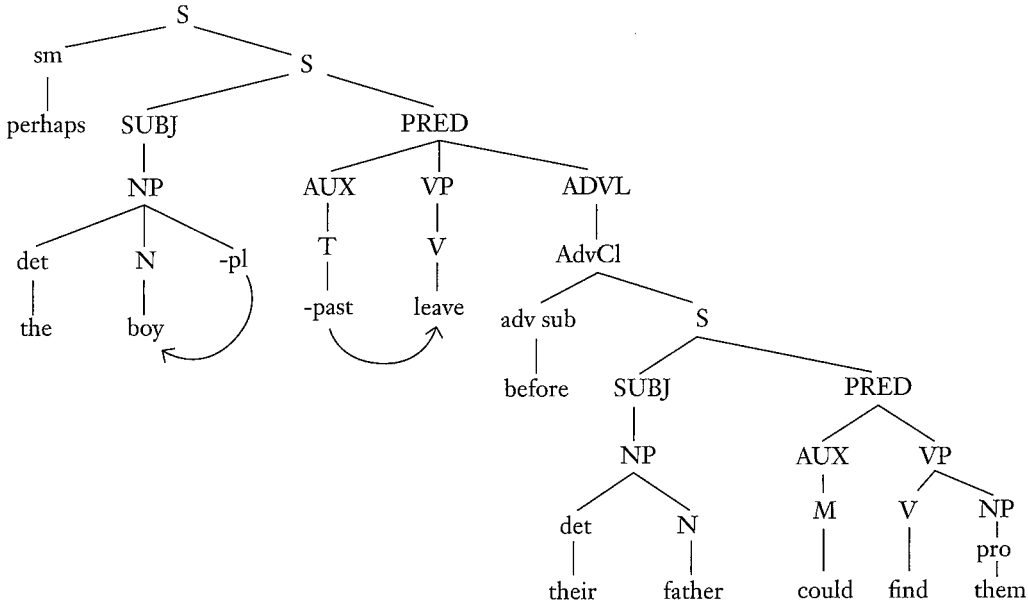
Remember that the curly brackets indicate that for each adverbial generated, one, but only one, of the three choices must be selected.

An adverb clause is expanded to include an adverb subordinator (adv sub) followed by a new sentence (S):

$$14. \text{AdvCl} \rightarrow \text{adv sub S}$$

This rule reintroduces S, a constituent already present in rule 1. To expand the new S, we would go back to rule 1 and begin the process all over again. In other words, as we mentioned earlier, phrase structure rules are recursive and can be applied as often as needed. Let us consider the tree diagram for a sentence with an adverb clause:

Perhaps the boys left before their father could find them.

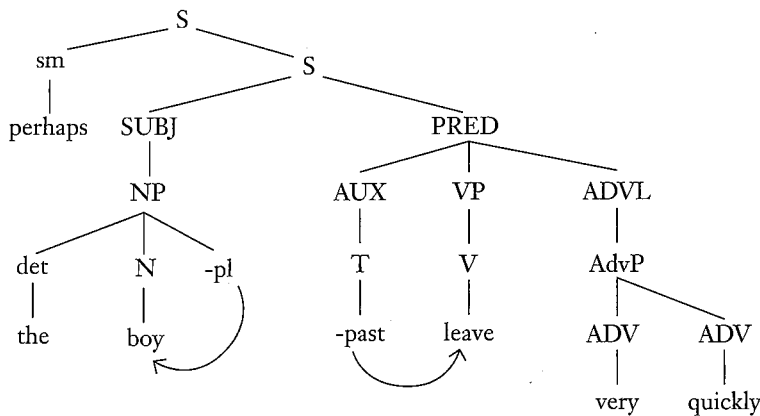


Another possible expansion of the adverbial in rule 13 is an adverb phrase (AdvP), which is rewritten as follows:

15. AdvP → (ADVⁿ)ADV

This rule means that an adverb phrase contains an obligatory adverb, ADV, optionally preceded by one or more other adverbs. An adverb occurs not only before adjectives as we saw earlier in rule 4, but also before adverbs. The following sentence and tree diagram illustrate a case where an optional adverb has been selected to modify an adverb:

Perhaps the boys left very quickly.



The superscript *n* allows for more than one adverb to occur. As is also the case with adjective phrases in rule 4, some adverbs may be repeated, while other series can have different adverbs:

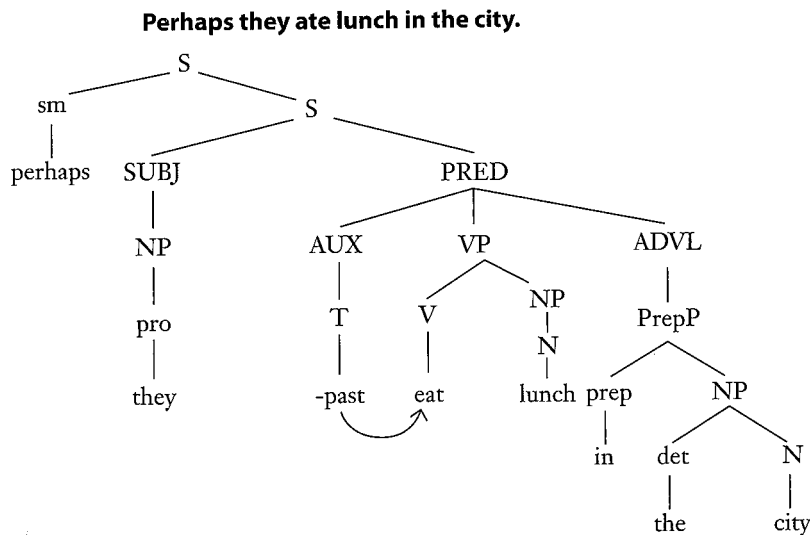
very, very quickly

really very quickly

Finally, an optional adverbial may also be expanded as a prepositional phrase.² Rule 5, which was introduced earlier and which is repeated here, would apply in such a case:

5. PrepP → prep NP

We are now in a position to more fully specify the tree diagram for the following sentence:



There is a difference between PrepPs that come under the adverbial node and PrepPs that are part of the VP. In the case of the latter, the PrepP is needed to complete the argument structure of a verb.

She gave the book to Mavis. *She gave the book. (the PrepP is needed, so it is part of the VP)

The same applies to the copular *be*. The PrepP is essential to completing the VP:

John is in the house.

***John is.** (which cannot stand by itself without a context, for example, a preceding question such as *Who is in the house?*)

All other cases where the preposition follows the verb are adverbial in origin and come under the adverbial node (ADVL).

Jack sells auto parts for a living.

Of course, the prepositional phrase contributes meaning to the sentence. The point is, though, that the PrepP is not syntactically necessary to complete the sentence. The sentence can stand on its own without the PrepP:

Jack sells auto parts.

Just as there are pronouns for NPs, there can be pro-adverbs for PrepPs. For example:

Joe is a tourist guide in Miami Beach. He likes working there.

Tourists flock to Miami Beach in the winter. Tourists flock there then.

There in both examples is a replacement for the prepositional phrase *in/to Miami Beach*. The pro-adverb *then* replaces *in the winter* in the second example. Our rules would get rather complicated if we included the pro-adverb option as well, so we have not done so. Nevertheless, pro-adverbs are useful for eliminating the redundancy of repeating adverbials.

The Ordering of Sentence-Final Adverbials

The final point to make about sentence-final adverbials is that when more than one occurs, the ordering is not random. To understand the order, it is important to first establish that there are many semantically different types of sentence-final adverbials (the following list is not exhaustive):

direction adverbial: **John ran to the store.**

position adverbial: **John is at home.**

manner adverbial: **John runs quickly.**

time adverbial: **Judy eats lunch at noon.**

frequency adverbial: **Judy eats lunch every day.**

purpose adverbial: **Harry works to earn money.**

reason adverbial: **Harry works because he has to pay bills.**

Some generalizations about the order of adverbials seem to apply most of the time when more than one adverbial occurs:

Adverbials of Manner, Direction, and Position:

1. Manner tends to precede or to follow direction and position.
2. Direction tends to precede position, and they tend to be adjacent.

He ran { **quickly around the track at the park.** [manner → direction → position] }
{ **around the track at the park quickly.** [direction → position → manner] }

Adverbials of Time and Frequency:

1. Time and frequency tend to follow manner, direction, and position.
2. Time and frequency are variable in order with respect to each other.

She eats lunch quickly (every day at noon/at noon every day).

manner (frequency time/time frequency)

Adverbials of Purpose and Reason:

1. Purpose and reason tend to follow all other adverbials.
2. Purpose tends to precede reason.

She eats lunch quickly every day { **in order to have time to read.** }
manner frequency { purpose }
{ **because she likes to have time to read.** }
reason

Jane went to Ohio to visit her uncle because she hadn't seen him for years.

purpose reason

***Jane went to Ohio because she hadn't seen her uncle for years to visit him.**

reason purpose

The ordering of sentence-final adverbials thus exhibits some variability, yet it is far from being random, since sequences such as the following are awkward, if not ungrammatical:

?/***Marcia walked this morning to the shopping center.**

?/***Jane fixes dinner every day quickly.**

?/***Harry goes jogging in order to stay fit at noon.**

We will come back to the topic of adverbial ordering in Chapter 25. For now, perhaps we should just adopt a rule of thumb that looks like this:

direction + position ↔ manner + time ↔ frequency + purpose + reason

One other error that ESL/EFL students make frequently does not have to do with the order of sentence-final adverbials, but rather has to do with the placement of an adverb of manner within a sentence. By following the sequence permitted in their L1, they incorrectly place an adverb of manner inside the VP, before the verb in English sentences:

***Heather plays beautifully the flute.**

Summary of the Phrase Structure Rules

At this point, we think it would be useful to list all the phrase structure rules we have introduced and discussed in this chapter and the preceding one:

1. $S \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} sm^n S \\ \text{SUBJ PRED} \end{array} \right\}$
2. $\text{SUBJ} \rightarrow \text{NP}$
3. $\text{NP} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} (\text{det}^3) (\text{AP}^n) \text{N} (-\text{pl}) (\text{PrepP}) \\ \text{pro} \end{array} \right\}$
4. $\text{AP} \rightarrow (\text{ADV}^n) \text{ADJ} (\text{PrepP})$
5. $\text{PrepP} \rightarrow \text{prep NP}$
6. $\text{PRED} \rightarrow \text{AUX VP} (\text{ADVL}^n)$
7. $\text{AUX} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{T} \\ \text{M} \end{array} \right\} (\text{pm}) (\text{perf}) (\text{prog}) \\ -\text{imper} \end{array} \right\}$
8. $\text{T} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} -\text{pres} \\ -\text{past} \end{array} \right\}$
9. $\text{perf} \rightarrow \text{have...-en}$
10. $\text{prog} \rightarrow \text{be...-ing}$
11. $\text{VP} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{cop} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{NP} \\ \text{AP} \\ \text{PrepP} \end{array} \right\} \\ \text{V} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} (\text{NP}^2) (\text{PrepP}) \\ (\text{NP}') \end{array} \right\} \end{array} \right\}$
12. $\text{NP}' \rightarrow \text{NP} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{NP} \\ \text{AP} \\ \text{PrepP} \end{array} \right\}$
13. $\text{ADVL} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{AdvCl} \\ \text{AdvP} \\ \text{PrepP} \end{array} \right\}$
14. $\text{AdvCl} \rightarrow \text{adv sub S}$
15. $\text{AdvP} \rightarrow (\text{ADV}^n) \text{ADV}$

Conclusion

This concludes our presentation of the basic phrase structure rules of English grammar. Additional rules and further expansions of the rules will be added from time to time in subsequent chapters as needed.

Don't worry if you are having a difficult time grasping the phrase structure rules and drawing trees. Learning grammar is in some ways like learning a new language. In the case of grammar, it is learning a new metalanguage—a language about language. It is well known that learning a new language takes practice. We intend to provide you with the necessary practice as you work your way through the remainder of this book. After this chapter, however, we will give you a break from drawing trees, picking them up again in Chapter 10 and subsequent chapters.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** The important thing to stress with the progressive and perfect aspects is that both are formed with two constituents that are not next to each other in the sentence:

Perfect—a form of the auxiliary *have* plus the past participle (*-en*) attached to the following verb

Progressive—a form of the auxiliary *be* plus the present participle (*-ing*) attached to the main verb

A common error committed by ESL/EFL students is to omit one of the two necessary constituents when forming one of the aspects (i.e., the auxiliary verb or the participial inflection). To help your students better understand this fact, ask them to memorize three sentences that you give them. Make sure that the sentences contain perfect and progressive aspects. Ask the students to close their eyes. While they are not looking, erase certain words or inflections. When the students open their eyes again, they have to guess what is missing. Repeat this procedure several times with different sentences (maybe some of the students can suggest example sentences).

2. **Form.** Another problem arises when the ESL/EFL student has to learn to deal with all the irregular past tense and past participle forms. The regular past participle forms, like the regular past tense, cause no undue hardship. This is because both are formed with the addition of the *-ed* inflectional affix for all persons and numbers:

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|------------------------|------------------|
| I walked | we walked | I have walked | we have walked |
| you walked | | you have walked | |
| he, she, it walked | they walked | he, she, it has walked | they have walked |

However, many different *irregular* forms of past tense verbs and past participles will have to be presented as separate vocabulary items, a few introduced at a time in a ten-minute portion of a class hour.

A good way of organizing such a lesson is to introduce together those past tense verbs and past participles that conform to the same phonological pattern. For example:

Verbs that pattern like *blow*, *blew*, *blown* (also, *grow*, *know*, *throw*)

| | | | |
|--|------|------|-----------------|
| | pres | past | past participle |
|--|------|------|-----------------|

These can all be presented together. The following is one way that this could be accomplished:

- a. The teacher gives the students the following paragraph and then reads it out loud:

Yesterday the wind blew very hard. It had never blown that hard before. I knew when it first began that it would be bad for my garden. The plants that grew out in the open were hurt badly. Only a few which had already grown strong survived the windstorm. If I had only known, I would have planted them closer to my house.

- b. The teacher has students read the paragraph once out loud and discusses with the class any new vocabulary. The teacher calls particular attention to the past tense and past participle forms of the underlined verbs:

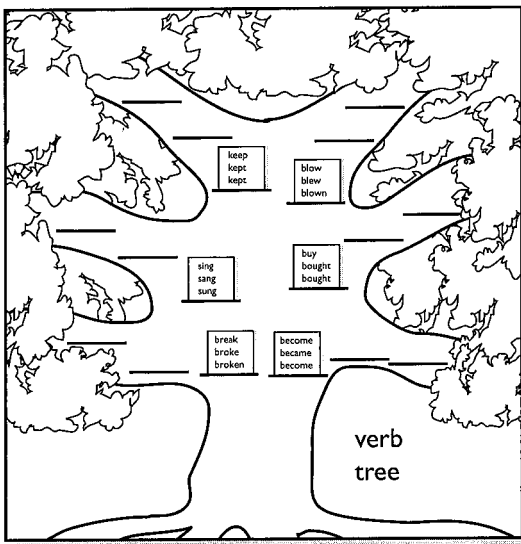
| | | |
|------|------|-------|
| blow | blew | blown |
| grow | grew | grown |
| know | knew | known |

c. The teacher gives students an exercise where students have to supply the correct form of a given infinitive verb for a number of sentences. For example:

(to grow) I have never _____ tulips before.

(to throw) After waiting a moment, the pitcher _____ the ball to the catcher.

3. **Form.** Olson and Shalek (1981) suggest that game-type activities be used to practice past participles. One of their ideas is to use a tree with many branches as a visual prop for a verb conjugation game. Each tree branch has several pockets for cards, and on each branch the pocket closest to the trunk has been filled with a card that gives one example of the verb conjugation pattern that the branch represents. The class (or a group) is then given a stack of cards that must be put into the remaining pockets in the tree branches. Sample cards are as follows (note that all three verb forms should be visible even when the card is placed in the pocket):



blow
blew
blown

sing
sang
sung

buy
bought
bought

break
broke
broken

keep
kept
kept

become
became
become

4. **Form.** One rule that you would probably want to teach in a lesson is the rule governing the usual order of sentence-final adverbials. The following is one way in which this might be accomplished (an idea suggested by Robin Abramson):

Step 1: The teacher makes a statement containing one or two adverbials about himself or herself and asks a question of a student that will elicit the same type of statement.

a. **Teacher:** I drove to school today. How did you get here?

Student: I took the bus (here).

b. **Teacher:** I come to English class every day. How often do you come (to class)?

Student: I come (to English class) every day.

c. **Teacher:** Do you know why I come here at 8:00 every morning? I come here at 8:00 every morning because I want to teach English. Why do you come here?

Student: I come at 8:00 because I want to learn English.

Step 2: The teacher gives the students following sentence:

1 2 3 4

Aza takes the bus to school at 8:00 every day because she wants to learn English.

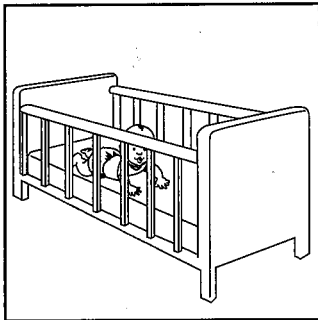
Step 3: The teacher tells students that each part she or he has numbered is called an adverbial. The teacher then asks students:

- a. What does number 1 describe? (where—direction)
- b. What does number 2 describe? (when—time)
- c. What does number 3 describe? (how often—frequency)
- d. What does number 4 describe? (why—reason)

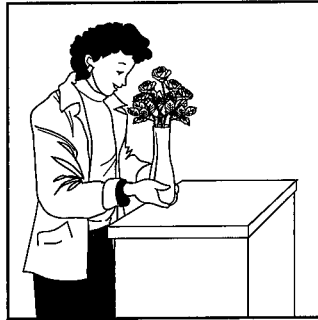
Step 4: The teacher divides the class into groups. The teacher then passes out a handout. Each handout contains sentences with scrambled adverbials. Each group is to work on one set of sentences and correct any improper order of adverbials. Students may refer to the model they have been given. (If more than one order is acceptable, both orders should be given as answers.) For the purposes of this exercise, only postverbal ordering of the type illustrated in the example in Step 2 should be discussed. Later (in Chapters 25, 27, and 30) we show that some adverbials occur sentence-initially for information management or emphasis (e.g., *Because of the bad weather, we stayed at home.*).

Step 5: When the groups are finished, students in each group give their answers, and the class or the teacher corrects where necessary.

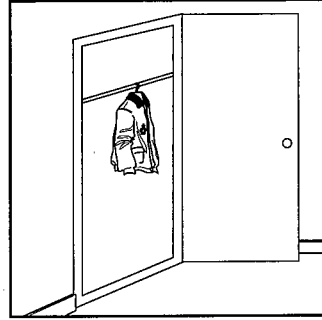
5. **Form.** With regard to verbs that take an obligatory adverbial of direction or position in the VP, V. Sandoval (personal communication) suggests having students complete sentences using visual aids such as the following:



The baby lay ...



Ann put the flowers ...



Roy hung his coat ...

Exercises

Test your knowledge of the structures introduced.

1. Provide an original example sentence illustrating each of the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your example.
 - a. imperative
 - b. modal
 - c. verb with two objects
 - d. adverb clause
 - e. phrasal modal
 - f. perfect aspect
 - g. progressive aspect
 - h. adverb phrase

2. Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences using the phrase structure rules introduced so far in this book:

- a. The quiet girls talked after the teachers left.
- b. Occasionally, John exercises on Sunday.
- c. The baby cried because she was hungry.
- d. Ian is going to take that class in the future.
- e. Anne could have been doing her homework.
- f. Fortunately, his brothers work very quietly.
- g. Perhaps Mary has been studying in the library.
- h. We gave some candy to the children.
- i. Ralph put the chairs in the hallway.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

3. Perhaps the most ubiquitous constituent that we have introduced in our phrase structure rules is the prepositional phrase. Prepositional phrases can be parts of noun phrases, adjective phrases, adverbials, verb phrases, or object predicates:

- a. PrepP in NP: a man of honor, an ounce of vodka
- b. PrepP in AP: fond of cats
- c. PrepP in ADVL: do laundry on Saturday
- d. PrepP in VP: be in the house, give the book to Mavis, lay in the crib
- e. PrepP in object predicate: put the flowers on the table

Try to think of one additional example for each of these.

4. If your students produce the following, what norms of Standard English have they not followed?

- a. *She can swims very fast.
- b. *The man been to Chicago twice.
- c. *Jane is jump rope.
- d. *Sarah put the books.
- e. *Lou speaks fluently French.
- f. *Megan cans speak Arabic.

5. Although phrase structure rules should not be presented to ESL/EFL students in the form given in this chapter, they do yield important insights into English structure. One of the insights that should be emphasized has to do with the composition of the progressive aspect. In light of the following errors by different ESL/EFL learners attempting to form the progressive aspect, what should be emphasized for each of them?

- a. *She running now.
- b. *She is run now.

6. One of your students asks you why a grammar text claims that English has no future tense. This student believes that English does have a future tense. How would you answer this question?

7. English speakers have been known to slip and say things like "I've already boughten the bread." Why do you think that they make such a slip?

8. What are the similarities and differences in the structure of the time adverbials in these sentences?
- a. We'll eat at 10 o'clock. c. I've studied English for ten years.
b. I'm going to Dallas next week. d. I've studied English ten years.
9. A student asks you why it's okay to say, "I went to school," "I went to church," or "I went to work," but not okay to say "I went to home." How will you answer this question?

Bibliography

REFERENCES

Olson, C., & Shalek, S. (1981). *Games and activities based on grammatical areas which are problems for the intermediate ESL student*. Unpublished manuscript, School for International Training, Brattleboro, VT.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

For useful lists of verbs with irregular past tense and past participles, see:

Clark, R., Burrows, A., & Moran, P. (2010). *The ESL miscellany* (4th ed.). Brattleboro, VT: Pro Lingua Associates.

For a list of phonologically similar irregular verbs, see:

Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D., & Goodwin, J. (with Griner, B.). (2010). *Teaching pronunciation: A course book and reference guide* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Endnotes

1. Each labeled part of a tree is called a *node*. For example, the S node has two "branches": the SUBJ and PRED. In turn, the PRED node has two branches: AUX and VP, and a possible third branch, ADVL.
2. Note that in sentence-final adverbials, prepositions can combine with nouns to convey temporal (time) or locative (place) meaning. As a general rule, nouns do not function on their own as adverbs in English. For example, take the following sentences, where the nouns *Monday* and *home* become adverbial with the help of the preceding prepositions:

Max will stay until Monday.

prep N

Mr. Green works at home.

prep N

However, in some sentences, such as the following, prepositions are optionally deletable:

I've lived in New York (for) many years.

I'll get the book (on) Thursday.

And in some sentences, for a variety of reasons, prepositions simply do not occur in English before certain nouns that function adverbially:

Jack went home.

He will return tomorrow.

The Tense-Aspect System

Introduction

In this chapter, we explore the English tense-aspect system. *Tense* is a grammatical device for situating events, states, or actions in time. As you can imagine, how humans divide time and represent it is different for speakers of different languages. For instance, French has the *passé composé*, which is similar in form to the English present perfect in that both are made up of two morphemes. However, while the *passé composé* is sometimes used where an English speaker would use the present perfect, the two do not always correspond. Consequently, French learners may overgeneralize the English present perfect and use it where English speakers would use the simple past. Here is a writing sample from a French learner describing a movie, where the overgeneralizations are underlined.

The movie has started with this woman. She was on the sidewalk and looked into a window with foods inside. She stole a loaf of bread . . . and she tried to escape, but a man has caught her. (Collins, 2007, p. 295)

Collins's research also shows that Japanese learners do not overgeneralize the present perfect to the same degree as French learners, presumably because Japanese has only one past tense form, similar in construction to the past tense in English. Some languages, such as Chinese, Thai, Yoruba, and Indonesian, have no tense markers on verbs at all. Of course, speakers of these languages can situate events, states, and actions in time; they just use other means to do so (e.g., lexical means), such as using their equivalent of *yesterday* to indicate the past.

In the same vein, as we mentioned in Chapter 6, English has no future tense; i.e., no explicit marking on the verb to convey futurity, as do the Romance and Slavic languages. Indeed, as Bergs (2010) notes, one of the central problems in describing and discussing expressions of futurity in contemporary English is the fact that there is no single "future" morpheme, as there was in Latin or as there is in Turkish (*-ecek-*) today. Instead, futurity in English is signaled by combinations of different forms and contextual factors.

Furthermore, as we have already seen, language teachers need to deal with meaning and use as well as form. It is not enough to say to ESL/EFL students, "English does not have a future tense," and be done with the matter. Therefore, in this chapter, we start by inventorying the forms that English *does* use to deal with the three time periods: a time before, a present time, and a time after. We also discuss perfect and progressive aspects, leaving most of the discussion of modals and phrasal modals to the next chapter. Since the exact mapping of form, meaning, and use varies considerably from language to language, mastering the English tense-aspect system requires considerable effort on the part of ESL/EFL students. Because of its importance

and its challenge, we devote two chapters to the subject. In this first chapter, we explore the form, meaning, and use of the English tense-aspect system at the sentence level. Sentence-level use is perhaps the way most teachers first introduce the forms. To really understand how the system functions, however, it is necessary to appreciate its application at the suprasentential, or discourse, level. Without this perspective, it is impossible to explain the various patterns of tense-aspect-modal combinations that occur, which we do in Chapter 9.

One point that we wish to underscore here is that even at the sentence level, a system is operating. We have sometimes seen teachers introduce a tense yet fail to show students how that tense contrasts with others, let alone how it fits into the system as a whole. In order to see how the system operates, we first describe its form. Next, we propose a core meaning for each of the tenses and aspects of the system, and we illustrate how the core meaning applies when tenses are used by themselves and when they are combined with one or both aspects. Finally, we contrast the uses of some of the most commonly confused combinations.

The Formal Characteristics of the Tense-Aspect System

Over the years, the important distinction between tense and aspect has become blurred. For this reason, sometimes English is said to have 12 “tenses,” as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Simple present | It breaks. |
| 2. Simple past | It broke. |
| 3. Simple future | It will break. |
| 4. Present perfect | It has broken. |
| 5. Past perfect | It had broken. |
| 6. Future perfect | It will have broken. |
| 7. Present progressive | It is breaking. |
| 8. Past progressive | It was breaking. |
| 9. Future progressive | It will be breaking. |
| 10. Present perfect progressive | It has been breaking. |
| 11. Past perfect progressive | It had been breaking. |
| 12. Future perfect progressive | It will have been breaking. |

We have tried to be careful in the preceding discussion to talk about the *tense-aspect* system and *tense-aspect* combinations. We feel that if the natural division between tense, which relates to *time*, and aspect, which has to do with the internal structure of the action occurring at a *given time*, are dealt with separately at first, the system that results from their subsequent combination is much easier to see and, therefore, easier to learn. We do this in the following chart by listing the two tenses, present and past, along the vertical axis. We include the future on this chart of tenses as well, for although there is no verb inflection for future time, any description of the English tense-aspect system needs to account for what form-meaning combinations *do* exist that relate to a time after the present. The aspects—simple (sometimes

called *zero aspect*), perfect, progressive, and their combination, perfect progressive—are arrayed along the horizontal axis, following the order of the AUX elements in Phrase Structure Rule #7, minus the modal and phrasal modal categories. We illustrate the tense-aspect combinations with the irregular verb *write* and the regular verb *walk*.

| THE TENSE-ASPECT COMBINATIONS IN ENGLISH | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Aspect → Tense ↓ | Simple | Perfect | Progressive | Perfect Progressive |
| | ∅ | have + -en | be + -ing | have + -en be + -ing |
| Present | write/writes walk/walks | has/have written has/have walked | am/is/are writing am/is/are walking | has/have been writing has/have been walking |
| Past | wrote walked | had written had walked | was/were writing was/were walking | had been writing had been walking |
| Future | will write will walk | will have written will have walked | will be writing will be walking | will have been writing will have been walking |

You can see in the chart that the traditional 12 “tenses” are actually 12 combinations of tense and aspect. They are named by combining a tense with an aspect or aspects, such as present perfect or past perfect progressive. Only the forms in the first column receive their names by first specifying the aspect—simple—and then the tense, such as simple present. In the other cases, the tense is mentioned first, followed by the aspect (e.g., *present perfect*).¹

The simple present remains in its base form (*write, walk*) with one exception—the third person singular form, which is made by adding an *-s* to the verb (*writes, walks*). The present perfect is formed with the verb *have* (*has* for third person singular) and the past participle, here symbolized by *-en*. It is important to remember that *-en* is only a symbol. Sometimes the past participle does indeed end in *-en*, as does our example irregular verb, *written*. Other times, the past participle is identical to the past tense form of the verb, as you can see in our other example, where the regular verb *walk* has the past participle *walked*. The present progressive form (sometimes called the *present continuous*) combines a form of the *be* verb (*am, is, are*), depending on the person and number of the subject, with the present participle, an *-ing* form.² Finally, the present perfect progressive can be seen to be a combination of the perfect form with *have + -en* and the progressive form with *be + -ing*. In this case, the *be* verb of the progressive carries the *-en* perfect ending; in other words, it is in its past participle form, *been*.

Reading across the second row, you can see that the various combinations with past tense and aspect form a similar pattern to the present tense. The past tense in its simple form in English is formed by using its past irregular form (as in the irregular verb in our chart, *wrote*), or with a regular verb such as *walk* (by adding *-ed* to give us *walked*). One difference from the simple present is that the form of the simple past remains invariant for all persons and numbers. The past perfect form is made with the past form of the *have* verb (i.e., *had*) followed by the past participle of the main verb. The past progressive form combines the past form of the *be* verb, here in two forms—first and third person singular form *was* and all the other persons and numbers with *were*—followed by the present participle. The past perfect progressive is formed

with the past form of the *have* verb (i.e., *had*) followed by the past participle of the *be* verb (i.e., *been*) and the present participle of the main verb, here *writing* or *walking*.

For the future line in our matrix, we use the modal *will*, since there is no future tense that appears as a marking on the verb in English. The future adheres to the same patterns as the present and past in terms of its combination of aspect markers: *will* with the base form for the simple future, *will + have + -en* for the future perfect, *will* with *be + -ing* for the future progressive, and *will + have + -en + be + -ing* for the future perfect progressive.

Since the perfect and progressive aspect markers contribute consistent meanings regardless of tense, in effect, ESL/EFL students have to learn only the form and meaning of the three tenses (in their simple form) and the two aspects (perfect and progressive) to develop a basic understanding of the tense-aspect system of English. This is why we say that by viewing the tenses and aspects as a system, the learning burden is lessened.

If we think of the Tense-Aspect Combinations chart as a map of the territory that the tense-aspect system of English covers, we can make some further observations that have pedagogical import. For example, the traffic on our map is focused more in the northwest (including the present progressive) than in other areas. In other words, the frequency with which “northwest” tense-aspect combinations are used is greater than in other regions of our map. Such observations can help teachers to decide where to put the limited time they have to best advantage. The southeast, for example, receives very little traffic and consequently should probably not receive as much attention as those combinations in the northwest.

Another point worth making is that it is the borders between the various regions of the map that prove to be especially challenging for students. Where, for example, does the territory of the past tense end and the present perfect begin? If you were to draw circles on the map to indicate those areas with troublesome boundaries, you would find that there are a few that prove particularly challenging to learn. You may try to do this now; however, we will revisit these difficult distinctions in a later section of this chapter, on the use of the tense-aspect system.

What we have described so far are the full forms of the tense-aspect system. It is also possible to contract the auxiliary verbs *have*, *be*, and *will* as well as *be* as a copula:

They've already met their goal.

Elizabeth's a comedian.

The contractions with pronouns are as follows:

| CONTRACTED FORM OF AUXILIARY VERBS AND COPULA BE | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| | be (cop or aux) | have | had | will |
| 1st person, singular | I'm | I've | I'd | I'll |
| 2nd person, singular/plural | you're | you've | you'd | you'll |
| 3rd person, singular | he's/she's/it's | he's/she's/it's | he'd/she'd/it'd | he'll/she'll/it'll |
| 1st person, plural | we're | we've | we'd | we'll |
| 3rd person, plural | they're | they've | they'd | they'll |

Notice that the forms for the third person singular *be* and *have* are the same, as are the forms for contracted *had* and the modal *would*, making for potential ambiguity in writing

[e.g., *He'd read about it* (*He had read about it* or *He would read about it*)], but in reality, the context would most often disambiguate them. Also worth mentioning is the fact that negative contractions are possible (e.g., *He isn't*); and we will take up this topic fully in Chapter 10.

Meaning in the English Tense-Aspect System

Meaning is an exceedingly important dimension in helping students manage the tense-aspect system. If students are able to develop a feel for the meanings conveyed by components of the system, they will have a tremendous advantage in learning to cope with the boundary problems. In this section, therefore, we attempt to capture the semantic core of each of the components of the system—the three tenses with simple aspect and the two other aspect markers used singly and in tandem.

There are three qualifications to our discussion of core meanings which we should make at the outset.

1. One meaning can have many forms.

We know that even though we might try to assign a core meaning to each construction, in fact, no simple one-to-one correspondence exists. For instance, Torres Cacoullós and Walker (2009), drawing on a corpus of spoken Canadian English from the Quebec English Project, provide these examples of how future time is conveyed with different constructions:

- a. Simple present: **I finish on the twenty-seventh of June and I start the summer camp on the eighth of July.** (Q009:405)
- b. Present progressive: **In fact, I'm leaving on September the first for Belfast for a couple of weeks.** (M019:223)
- c. Modal *will*: **And he'll probably live 'til a hundred.** (Q029:1480)
- d. Phrasal modal *be going to*: **My doctor tells me I'm going to live 'til a hundred.** (Q029:341)

English is not alone in having more than one form to express the future. As we will see, these forms were introduced into English at different times in its history, so that older forms coexist with newer ones.³ We will discuss the differences among these four constructions later in this chapter, but clearly, it is not a simple core meaning of futurity that differentiates them. On the other hand, Bergs (2010) notes these expressions of futurity can be regarded from a construction grammar perspective as comprising a construction family; in other words, they are related.

2. The meaning of a tense or aspect depends to a certain extent on the meaning of the verb.

We will also discuss the issue of the semantics of the verb later in this chapter, but for now, let us illustrate this second qualification by calling attention to the fact that English verbs divide into two basic aspectual classes: perfective and imperfective. Perfective verbs represent actions that are “temporally bounded,” meaning that they have an endpoint (e.g., *They built the house next door*), whereas imperfective verbs construe events and processes as having no endpoint (e.g., *They knew the neighbors*). As the cognitive linguist Langacker (2001) puts it, “Perfectives resist the simple present but take the progressive, while imperfectives do the opposite” (p. 255):

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| *He builds a house. | He is building a house. [perfective] |
| He knows the truth. | *He is knowing the truth. [imperfective] |

This is because the function of the progressive is “to convert a perfective process into an imperfective one” (Langacker, 2008, p. 155). The point is that based on whether a verb is perfective or imperfective, it will interact differently with different aspects.

3. One form can have many meanings.

The mirror opposite of the first qualification can be illustrated with the *-ed* marker. It marks past tense (e.g., *Our plane arrived late yesterday.*), but it also has a presence in the following:

a. If I walked home after school today, it would take me all afternoon.

b. They said that they loved grammar.

c. Host to guest: Did you want something to eat before the game?

d. Sales clerk to customer: What is it that you wanted?

In sentence a, a conditional, the action is hypothetical and hasn't taken place, so obviously the *-ed* is not signifying past time. In sentence b, an example of reported or indirect speech, the verb in the embedded clause is in past tense, but the expression of their affection for grammar could well still apply—that is, it may not be over and done with. In sentence c, the irregular form of the past tense of the verb *do* is used in a present offer; in sentence d, the past tense is used in a question pertaining to the present. We could cite other examples, but the point is that in order to understand the meaning of the tenses, we must go to a deeper level of abstraction than that of temporal meaning. By so doing, we will see what core meaning underlies the use of the past tense in the preceding example sentences and in all other sentences in which it occurs. The *core meaning* of a particular form is the meaning that is most central, primary, or invariant (Hatch & Brown, 1995). We begin by analyzing the core meanings of the tenses with simple aspect.

SIMPLE ASPECT

Hirtle (1967) explains that the term *simple aspect* refers to events that are conceptualized as complete wholes. The events are not presented as allowing further development. This aspect stands in contrast to *progressive aspect*, which is incomplete or imperfective—where the event or state is viewed as some portion of a whole and where there is room for further development or change. We can see this difference by comparing examples with the simple present tense and present progressive:

Susan and Carl live in Newark.

Susan and Carl are living in Newark.

The simple present in the first sentence presents the fact that Susan and Carl live in Newark as a whole event, not allowing for further development and with no suggestion of change. The present progressive in the second sentence suggests that their living in Newark may be temporary, thus allowing for the possibility of change. In the second sentence, Susan and Carl's living in Newark is some portion of the whole in the sense that we understand that they may have lived elsewhere before moving to Newark and will perhaps in the future move again.

With this explanation of the core meaning of simple aspect as a backdrop, let us consider what core meaning each of the tenses adds.

Simple Present Tense

The present tense conveys immediate factuality (Lewis, 1986):

I skim the *New York Times* at breakfast.

The Earth rotates around the sun.

My mother loves daisies.

It is a beautiful day.

Let us now show how the core meanings of the simple present, its complete or unchanging nature, and its immediate factuality apply:

a. Habitual actions in the present:

He walks to school every day.

b. General timeless truths, such as physical laws or customs:

Water freezes at 0 degrees centigrade.

Spaniards eat dinner late.

c. With *be* and other stative verbs to indicate states:

There is a large house on the corner.

I know Mr. Jackson.

The car belongs to Bill.

or even the inception of states:

Now I understand.

d. In the subordinate clauses of time or condition when the main clause contains a future-time verb:⁴

After he finishes work, he'll do the errands.

If Cindy passes the bar exam, she'll be able to practice law.

e. Future expression (when a scheduled event is involved, usually with a future-time adverbial):

I have a meeting next Wednesday at that time.

f. Present event/action (usually in sporting events or demonstrations/procedures of some sort):

Here comes the pitch; Ortiz swings and misses.

Now I add three eggs to the mixture.

g. Present speech acts (where the action is accomplished in the speaking of it):

I resign from the commission.

h. Conversational historical present (used to refer to certain past events in narration):

"So he stands up in the boat and waves his arms to catch our attention."

It can be seen, then, how each event being reported on in the simple present is complete; we can infer that there will be no change. Further, each use is an immediate factual report. Next, let us consider the simple past tense. The same general semantic character for simple aspect holds for the simple past as well. Simple past describes events as wholes, ones not conducive to change or development.

Simple Past Tense

The simple past also states facts. What the core meaning of the past tense adds is a sense of remoteness (Knowles, 1979). The event can be remote in time:

The Boston Red Sox won the World Series in 2013.

Even if the event is a recent one, such as

I finished my term paper!

the "remoteness" comes in the feeling that the event is over and done with. As we saw earlier, the feeling of remoteness can apply even to notions other than time:

If I walked home from school, it would take all afternoon.

Here, the remoteness is due to the conditional, hypothetical nature of this statement. In fact, this is an imaginary conditional (see Chapter 27), and remote from reality.⁵ In the

example sentence given earlier, “They said that they loved grammar,” the remoteness comes from the fact that this is a report of what some other people originally said. It is indirect, not their actual expression of affection (see Chapter 33). In the host’s offer “Did you want something to eat before the game?” the use of the past-tense form of the *do* verb makes the offer more indirect than it would be if the present-tense form *do* were used. Here, indirectness can be a sign of politeness. This same interpretation explains why the clerk used the past tense in his question to the customer about what she had in mind.

Let us now examine uses of the past tense to see how these notions of completeness and remoteness apply:

- a. A definite single completed event/action in the past:
I attended a meeting of that committee last week.
- b. Habitual or repeated action/event in the past:
It snowed almost every weekend last winter.
- c. An event with duration that applied in the past with the implication that it no longer applies in the present:
Professor Nelson taught at Yale for 30 years.
- d. With states in the past:
He appeared to be a creative genius.
He owed me a lot of money.
- e. Imaginative conditional in the subordinate clause (referring to present time, as discussed in Chapter 27):
If he took better care of himself, he wouldn’t be absent so often.
- f. Social distancing:
Did you want to sit down and stay a while?

So, as we can see, the simple past is used when the speaker conceptualizes a complete event factually, but as remote in some way.

Simple Future Tense with Will (or the Contracted ’ll)

The picture that we have been painting for simple aspect holds for the simple future as well. In other words, simple future is used when the event is conceptualized as a whole. One difference in its core meaning is that events in the future cannot be factually knowable in the same way as those in the past or present can. Nevertheless, Salkie (2010) argues that *will* really is for the most part a marker of future tense in English.

We will cover the first half of the book this term.

We will never know what cures tropical plants possess if we don’t become serious about preserving the forests in which they grow.

Will has other meanings as well, and these are dealt with in the next chapter on modals. Let us now see how its core meaning applies:

- a. An action to take place at some definite future time:
Joel will take the bar exam next month.
- b. A future habitual action or state:
After October, Marlana will take the 7:30 train to Chicago every day.

And even for present habits, about which are expected to continue into the future:

Erik is so funny. He’ll wake up, and before coming downstairs, he’ll start playing with his trains. (example from Lori Gray, speaking about her son)

- c. A situation that may obtain in the present and will obtain in the future but with some future termination in sight (notice here it is not the *will* that suggests the limitation on the event, but the subordinate clause):

Nora will live in Caracas until she improves her Spanish.

- d. In the main (result) clause of future conditionals:

If you go, you'll be sorry.

Here again, we should be able to see that the simple tense allows us to talk about events as wholes. Before moving on, then, let us summarize. Simple aspect allows us to talk about events as not open to development or change and to make factual statements or strong predictions about them. This is true despite the tense and is true for both specific facts and general ones.

| <i>Time</i> | <i>Specific</i> | <i>General</i> |
|-------------|------------------------|---|
| Present | Joe misses Susie. | Leap year comes every four years. |
| Past | You slept till noon! | Dinosaurs roamed the Earth for millions of years. |
| Future | I'll be home by 6 P.M. | Oil will float on water. |

PERFECT ASPECT

The core meaning of the perfect is “prior,” and it is used in relation to some other point in time. For instance, present perfect is used retrospectively to refer to a time prior to now:

Have you done your homework?

The past perfect offers a retrospective point of view on some past time:

He had left before I arrived.

The future perfect offers a retrospective point of view on some future time:

Mark will have finished all his chores by the time we get there.

Next, we examine in detail the combination of the perfect with the three tenses to see how this core meaning applies.

Present Perfect

- a. A situation that began at a prior point in time and continues into the present:

I have been a teacher since 1967.

- b. An action occurring or not occurring at an unspecified prior time that has current relevance:

I have already seen that movie.

- c. A very recently completed action (often with *just*):

Don has just finished his homework.

- d. An action that occurred over a prior time period and that is completed at the moment of speaking:

The value of the Johnsons' house has doubled in the last four years.

- e. With verbs in subordinate clauses of time or condition:

She won't be satisfied until she has finished another chapter.⁶

If you have done your homework, you can watch TV.

Past Perfect

- a. An action completed in the past, prior to some other past event or time:
He had already left before I could offer him a ride.
She had worked at the post office before 1992.
- b. Imaginative conditional in the subordinate clause (referring to past time):
If Sally had studied harder, she would have passed the exam.

Future Perfect

- a. A future action that will be completed prior to a specific future time:
I will have finished all this work by 5 P.M.
- b. A state or accomplishment that will be completed in the future, prior to some other future time or event:
At the end of the summer, the Blakes will have been married for 10 years.

Thus, you can see that when it interacts with each of the three tenses, perfect aspect allows us a retrospective point of view from a particular point in time: present, past, or future.

PROGRESSIVE ASPECT

We have already made the case for the core meaning of *progressive aspect* as being imperfective, meaning that it portrays an event in a way that allows for it to be incomplete, or somehow limited. You saw how this core aspectual meaning was manifest in the contrast between an event of a temporary nature, in contrast with an ongoing state:

Susan and Carl are living in Newark.
Susan and Carl live in Newark.

However, the progressive also offers another example where one form has more than one meaning. While the imperfective aspectual meaning of the progressive is its default in Modern English, in Middle English, the progressive was also used to highlight particularly remarkable situations (Kranich, 2013). Kranich suggests that its length added to its effectiveness for attracting attention. Consequently, this latter, “subjective” meaning has remained, although it is not as frequent as its aspectual one. In Kranich’s study of 783 progressives used in British English (1950–1999), 86 percent were aspectual and 14 percent were subjective. Entertaining a historical perspective on meaning is informative; at the same time, we need to account for contemporary options in order to help our students interpret the language they hear and read.

Here are uses of the tense-progressive aspect combinations so that you can see how the core meanings of the progressive hold for all the tenses:

Present Progressive

Activity in progress:

- He is attending a meeting now.**
- a. Extended present (action will end and therefore lacks the permanence of the simple present tense):
I’m studying geology at the University of Colorado.
 - b. A temporary situation:
Chelsea is living with her parents.
 - c. Repetition or iteration in a series of similar ongoing actions:
Henry is kicking the soccer ball around the backyard.

- d. Expresses future (when an event is planned; usually with a future-time adverbial). A planned event may be conceptualized as in progress (Leech, Hundt, Mair, & Smith, 2009, p. 133):

She's coming tomorrow.

- e. A change in progress:

She's becoming more and more like her mother.

And here is an example of its subjective meaning:

- f. Emotional comment on present habit (often co-occurring with frequency adverbs *always* or *forever*):

He's always delivering in a clutch situation. (approving)

He's forever acting up at these affairs. (disapproving)

Past Progressive

- a. An action in progress at a specific point of time in the past:

He was walking to school at 8:30 this morning.

- b. Past action simultaneous with some other event that is usually stated in the simple past. The past progressive provides the background, the simple past the foreground (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p. 611):

Karen was washing her hair when the phone rang.

While Alex was traveling in Europe, he ran into an old friend.

- c. Repetition or iteration of some ongoing past action:

Jake was coughing all night long.

- d. Social distancing (which comes from the past tense and the tentativeness of the progressive aspect):

I was hoping you could lend me \$10.

Future Progressive

Although this form is more commonly used in British English than in American English, its use has expanded in this century in both dialects (Celle & Smith, 2010).

- a. An action that will be in progress at a specific time in the future:

A driver will be waiting for you when you arrive.

- b. Duration of some specific future action:

Mavis will be working on her thesis for the next three years.

PERFECT PROGRESSIVE ASPECT

As its name implies, this aspect combines the “prior” sense of the perfect with the meaning of “incompleteness” inherent in the progressive aspect:

They have been working hard on a special project.

We understand that the event being reported here has begun prior to now and that their hard work is limited—that is, it will not continue indefinitely. Next, we examine how these two core meanings work in tandem for each of the tenses.

Present Perfect Progressive

- a. A situation or habit that began in the past (recent or distant) and that continues up to the present (and possibly into the future):

Bart has been going out with Alicia.

- b. An action in progress that is not yet completed:
I have been reading that book.
- c. A state that changes over time:
The students have been getting better and better each week.
- d. A subjective, evaluative comment on something observed over time triggered by current evidence:
You've been drinking again!

Past Perfect Progressive

- a. An action or habit taking place over a period of time in the past, prior to some other past event or time:
Karen had been working hard, so her doctor told her to take a vacation. She had been trying to finish her degree that year.
- b. A past action in progress that was interrupted by a more recent past action:
We had been planning to vacation in Maine, but changed our minds after receiving the brochure on Nova Scotia.
- c. An ongoing past action or state that becomes satisfied by some other event:
I had been hoping to see that play, so I was pleased when I won the tickets.

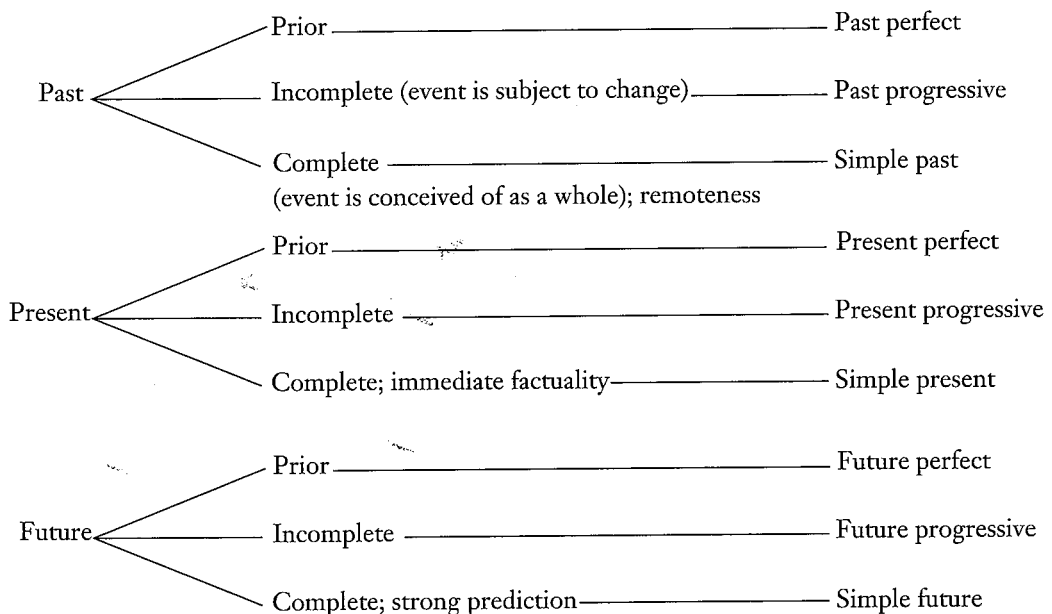
Future Perfect Progressive

Durative or habitual action that is taking place in the present and that will continue into the future, up until or through a specific future time:

- On Christmas Eve, we will have been living in the same house for 20 years.**
- He will have been keeping a journal for 10 years next month.**

INTERIM SUMMARY

We can sum up our observations so far concerning the core meanings of the English tense-aspect system with this diagram:



While this approach accounts for much of the core semantics of the system, it does need some refinement at a more local level. For one thing, the second qualification that we made earlier reminds us that the meaning of the grammatical tense and aspect can be affected by the lexical meaning of the verb since verbs have their own inherent aspect.

THE LEXICAL ASPECT OF VERBS

As you saw in Chapter 3, verbs not only have grammatical aspect, but they have lexical aspect as well. Verbs can be divided into four categories based on their inherent lexical aspect (Vendler, 1967):

| <i>Activity</i> | <i>Accomplishment</i> | <i>Achievement (punctual)</i> | <i>State</i> ⁷ |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| run | paint (a picture) | recognize (something) | have |
| walk | make (a chair) | realize (something) | contain |
| swim | build (a house) | lose (something) | seem |
| live | write (a novel) | find (something) | want |
| study | grow up | win the race | like |

Activities, accomplishments, and achievements all involve changes of state. Activity verbs are durative and describe an ongoing action. They each have an undefined beginning and end point. Accomplishment verbs, on the other hand, share with activity verbs their durativity, but each has a well-defined end point, when the particular action described in the verb phrase is—or is not—completed. Achievement verbs also each have a well-defined end point; however, they have no duration. They are punctual. Stative verbs do not involve change. They depict a stable situation that is assumed to last more or less indefinitely. Often stative verbs are broken down into the following subcategories, with several verbs appearing in more than one category depending on their meaning:

Sensory perception: **smell, see, hear, taste, feel**

Mental perception: **know, believe, think, understand, mean, doubt**

Possession: **possess, have, own, belong**

Emotions, attitudes, and opinions: **like, love, hate, dislike, want, desire, need, prefer, appreciate, doubt, feel, wish**

Measurement: **equal, measure, weigh, cost**

Relationship: **contain, entail, consist of**

Description: **be, resemble, sound, appear, seem, look**

How these four main categories of verbs—activity, accomplishment, achievement, and state—interact with the aspects that we have just considered is as follows:

With Simple Aspect

The simple tenses can express either specific or general facts, events, habits, and states with all four verb types.

With Perfect Aspect

Activity verbs are not as commonly used with perfect aspect as some of the other categories of verbs. When they are used with perfect aspect, they describe a prior experience or activity:

I have run a marathon before.

Accomplishment and achievement verbs go easily with perfect aspect and signal prior events that are completed:

John Updike has written many novels.

The true meaning of that holiday has been lost.

Stative verbs with perfect aspect signal a state that may or may not have ended at the time of speech:

I have owned a VW { **before.**
since 2007.

With Progressive Aspect

Activity verbs readily take the progressive, which reinforces the fact that the action has duration:

Meg is washing the windows.

Accomplishment verbs also take the progressive, but in this case, the progressive focuses on progress toward a particular end that has not yet been completed:

The contractors are building the new civic center.

With achievement verbs, because they are punctual, the progressive gives the meaning of iteration:

He is nodding his head in agreement.

or inception of an event:

Joe is realizing his mistake.

Alternatively, by stretching out the moment, the speaker can place emphasis on the action associated with the achievement:

The plane is landing right on schedule.

It has been said that stative verbs do not normally take the progressive because of a fundamental semantic conflict between a grammatical aspect, which denotes a limited duration or incompleteness; and a lexical aspect, which expresses a stable state:

***I am knowing the answer.**

However, such an unqualified generalization discounts the frequently made observation that the progressive can occur with stative verbs to achieve certain effects (see Kesner Bland, 1988, for discussion) and that stative verbs regularly occur with the progressive in Indian English. The progressive turns states into events. As such, “progressive statives” can be used to

a. intensify the emotion expressed by the verb:

I'm hating this assignment.

I hate this assignment.

b. indicate current behavior as opposed to general description:

He's being rude.

He's rude.

c. introduce change in states by focusing on differences in degree across time:

I'm understanding less and less about life, the older I get.

Other uses of progressive statives were found by Gavis (1997) to

d. show limited duration:

Are you understanding this now?

e. emphasize conscious involvement:

What we are seeing is a red dwarf star.

f. show vividness:

One night in the middle of the night, I'm hearing dripping.

g. show personal involvement:

Are you liking it? (cf. Do you like it?)

h. mitigate criticism:

I like the first piano notes, but I'm not liking it where the strings come in. (cf. . . . but I do not like it . . .)

i. avoid imposition:

I was just wanting to invite you to a gathering . . . (message on answering machine)

The other difficulty that we run into in claiming that stative verbs do not take the progressive aspect is that many stative verbs, even the classic verb of state, the copula *be*, have nonstative counterparts that are active in meaning and that may occur with the progressive:

State (subject is not the agent)

The steak weighs 12 ounces.

You are a fool.

I taste cinnamon in these rolls.

Action (subject is the agent)

The butcher is weighing the steak.

You're being a fool.

We'll be tasting wine at the vineyard.

All this means that we have to think in terms of stative “meanings” rather than stative “verbs” to correctly understand and explain restrictions on the use of the progressive aspect in English.

With Perfect Progressive Aspect

With activity verbs, perfect progressive aspect implies that the action began in the past and has duration at the present time:

Mike has been exercising for two hours.

or is iterative and/or habitual:

Mike has been exercising for years.

With accomplishment verbs, the perfect progressive indicates that the action has been going on for some time and is not yet complete:

They have been repairing that bridge for months.

With achievement verbs, perfect progressive aspect is a bit strange if only one action is intended, due to the fact that achievement verbs are punctual:

?Lisa has been winning that race for hours.

but not if the achievement is iterative:

Lisa has been winning that race for years.

With stative verbs, perfect progressive aspect often appears to be more compatible than progressive aspect alone:

?I am wanting to see you.

I have been wanting to see you.

Here, the perfect adds the notion of inception prior to present time and thus signals that the state has history, or duration.

Besides the obvious implication that lexical aspect interacts with grammatical aspect to affect meaning, another point that we should make is that lexical aspect influences the acquisition of the simple tenses as well. Researchers in second language acquisition have discovered that the acquisition of past tense is not a unitary phenomenon, but rather proceeds in stages. Learners begin by associating tense-aspect forms with categories of verbs where the forms and meanings correspond best, the “aspect hypothesis” (Andersen & Shirai, 1994). For

example, learners first use the past tense with achievement and accomplishment verbs, verbs that have obvious completion (e.g., *He found the winning ticket.*). Similarly, they use progressive aspect initially with activity verbs without a defined endpoint (e.g., *They are studying Arabic.*). Another trend is for learners not to use past tense with adverbs of frequency, such as *never* and *always* (Bardovi-Harlig & Reynolds, 1995), perhaps because they associate past tense with completed actions that don't recur. Collins's (2007) research supports the aspect hypothesis. For instance, one of her Japanese learners of English wrote the following (pp. 299–300):

...He swam a kilometer, ran 5 kilometers and then rode his bicycle 10 kilometers.

The same learner later wrote,

...After that, the weather was nice so my mother was swimming in the ocean and my father was riding his bicycle along the beach. Sometimes my mother was running along the beach beside him.

In other words, it appears that when the learner was construing the actions as accomplishments, she used the simple past, and when she thought of them as activities, she used past progressive whereas English speakers would use simple past for both. This construal offers the learner a good starting point, and it is clear that she knew the form of the tense-aspect combinations, but, as Collins (2007) observes, she may not have been able to use them to express the meanings that she intended.

ADVERBS OF TENSE AND TIME

To conclude our discussion of the meanings associated with the verb tense-aspect system in English, we should point out that because of the semantics of the tense-aspect combinations, certain adverbs of indefinite time (*still, yet, soon, already, anymore, and just*) often co-occur with particular combinations. Consider how they all could be used as different answers to the following question:

Has Chris finished her M.A. thesis?

- 1. Yes, she has *just* finished it.**
- 2. Yes, she has *already* filed it.**
- 3. No, she hasn't finished it *yet*.**
- 4. No, but she'll finish it *soon*.**
- 5. No, she's *still* working on it.**
- 6. No, she's not working on it *anymore*.**

In answer 1, *just* signals recent completion, while in 2, *already* is used to signal a result that occurred previously—perhaps earlier than anticipated. In 3, the adverb *yet* indicates noncompletion. All three occur with the present perfect, although American English, unlike Standard British English, also permits simple past tense to occur with these three adverbs. For example:

- 1. Yes, she *just* finished it.**
- 2. Yes, she *already* finished it.**
- 3. No, she *didn't* finish it *yet*.**

Like 3, answer 4 also signals noncompletion; however, future completion is implied in *soon*, whereas it is less certain in *yet*. The present progressive with *still* in 5 signals a state of affairs that is somehow persisting in the present—perhaps longer than anticipated—while answer 6 indicates noncompletion, and one is led to believe that the task has been abandoned.

Consider also the following situation. A parent may ask his or her child:

Have you done your homework *already*?

—or—

Have you done your homework *yet*?

The question with *already* suggests that the parent expects a positive answer but perhaps is surprised because he or she did not expect completion that early. The question with *yet* is more neutral, or it may be used to signal that the parent does not expect the homework to be finished but wants to make the child feel as though it should be.

Note also that *just* and *soon* appear to be complementary retrospective and future markers—signaling recent completion and expected completion in the immediate future, respectively:

Joe has *just* finished his assignment, and I will finish mine *soon*.

A final point is that *anymore*,⁸ which negates the past, can be viewed as complementary to *still*,⁹ which affirms continuation of the past in the present:

Helen's *still* living in Omaha, but she doesn't go to school *anymore*.

The semantically incomplete connotations of *yet*, *anymore*, and *still* and the semantically complete (or about to be completed) nature of *just*, *soon*, and *already*—as well as the tenses with which these forms co-occur most frequently—are facts about English that your student might find helpful as something tangible to guide their tense usage. Of course, some of these adverbs have other nontemporal meanings as well, which we discuss in Chapter 25 and elsewhere. We leave the meaning dimension of the tense-aspect system now and turn to the use dimension.

The Use of the Tense-Aspect System

In ways that are not true for other structures, the meaning/use distinction in the tense-aspect system is difficult to discern. What we have attempted to do, therefore, is to anticipate the troublesome boundaries for ESL/EFL students, to which we alluded earlier, and to elucidate the differences by calling upon both semantic and pragmatic resources. Chapter 9 in its entirety is devoted further to issues of use.

UNDERSTANDING DIFFICULT CONTRASTS IN TENSE-ASPECT COMBINATIONS

1. *Simple Present versus Present Progressive*

The present progressive is used for limited action in progress, while the simple present is more compatible with states. Thus, this distinction is manifest in the following ways:

- a. Action happening at the moment of speaking versus a habit:
Why are you wearing glasses? (moment of speech—i.e., right now)
Why do you wear glasses? (habitual)
- b. Temporary event versus permanent situation:
Linda is living with her parents. (temporary—until she gets a better job)
Linda lives with her parents. (permanent or no end in sight—because it costs her too much to live alone)
- c. Specific event versus general situation:
What are you doing for Thanksgiving? (one specific Thanksgiving holiday—the forthcoming one)
What do you do for Thanksgiving? (the holiday each year)

d. Activity versus state (two different lexical entries required):

I am thinking about the answer. (mental activity)

I think it is 144. (mental state/report)

2. *Present Perfect versus Present Perfect Progressive*

The present perfect progressive emphasizes activity as compared with achievement with the present perfect. Thus, the following distinctions may occur:

a. Specific and possibly still ongoing activity versus prior event:

I have been visiting my great-grandmother. (possibly still ongoing)

I have visited my great-grandmother. [prior event(s)]

b. Strong implication of continuation versus continuation being only a possibility:

I have been teaching for 25 years. (and I can't imagine doing anything else)

I have taught for 25 years. (so now it's time to think about doing something else)

Notice, in fact, that with this pair, the present perfect progressive implies continuation unless it is contradicted by another clause:

I have been teaching for 25 years, but now I want to do something else.

c. A specific accomplishment, incomplete, versus a completed one:

Gail has been remodeling her home. (incomplete)

Gail has remodeled her home. (complete)

3. *Simple Past versus Present Perfect*

This distinction is extremely difficult for many ESL/EFL students to make (see, for example, Lim, 2007). You could call their attention to some sentence-level contrasts, but this distinction is often best sorted out at the level of discourse (see Chapter 9). One thing is certain: Even though one is a present tense and the other a past, the choice does not depend upon the time at which the event took place. As Inoue (1979) has pointed out, the truth value of the present perfect is identical to the past. For example, in the following pair of sentences, the time at which Sheila joined is not different:

Sheila has joined the Sierra Club.

Sheila joined the Sierra Club.

If the time of her joining is the same, what accounts for the difference? We might say that the use of the present perfect has more to do with our present perspective on the event rather than on the actual time at which it took place. This concept is difficult to get across to ESL/EFL students. Therefore, some additional sentence-level ways to help students determine whether to use the present perfect or the simple past tense are the following:

a. The simple past often occurs with specific past-time adverbials. Recall that the core meaning of the past tense is remoteness. The use of specific past-time adverbials (e.g., *yesterday*, *last year*, *2008*) makes the past tense obligatory. The use of certain more general temporal adverbials is commonly associated with the perfect (e.g., *already*, *since* + date, *for* + time span, *yet*).

However, some languages associate these general temporal adverbials with different tenses than does English. For example, German speakers use *since* and *for* with the simple present rather than the present perfect. As a result, German learners of English might say

***I live in Munich since 2000.** (cf. *I have lived in Munich since 2000.*)

b. Even if a past-time adverbial isn't explicit, the remoteness may be defined elsewhere in the context or simply implied:

John Lennon was a creative genius.

- c. The past tense is used for a completed historical period versus an incomplete one:

My father lived here all his life. (complete—implies the father has left or is no longer alive)

My father has lived here all his life. (incomplete—the father still lives there)

- d. The present perfect is used for an indefinite versus a definite query:

Have you ever gone to Phoenix?

Did you go to Phoenix? (You said that you traveled to the Southwest last summer.)

In fact, you would almost have to have some shared knowledge with your listener to use the specific past tense in such situations. Use of the present perfect in such a context does not presume shared knowledge.

- e. Citing Joos (1968), Knowles (1976) gives us another way to view the differences between the simple past and present perfect. According to Knowles, the function of the present perfect is to change the nature of the relationship between the subject and predicate—the present perfect emphasizes the predicated event's result on the grammatical subject. In the following example,

I've been to Japan twice already, but I still don't speak much Japanese.

the speaker is not so much talking about the trips as characterizing their effect on him- or herself ("I") at the time of the discourse. To learn anything further about the trips requires additional questions and answers.

- f. Nishiyama and Koenig (2010) give us one other angle to consider with the perfect. They also take issue with a temporal reading of the perfect, in part because of the difficulty of distinguishing it from the past based on the time at which an event took place. They also point out that the argument concerning the incompatibility of past-time adverbials with English present perfects (which argues in favor of the present perfect having a temporal function) is flawed. In fact, it is possible to have past time adverbials with the present perfect, which apparently occur more commonly in Australian English than in other dialects (Engel & Ritz, 2000):

We have already discussed this affair at some length last night. (McCoard, 1978, p. 128 in Nishiyama & Koenig, 2010, p. 641)

Such arguments lead Nishiyama and Koenig (2010) to claim that the perfect is a stativizer; i.e., it introduces a state, the nature of which is inferable from the context. An example they give is

..., **he has been a member of her household ever since.**

The state to be inferred from this sentence is his membership in her household. The fact that the state is inferable means that a semantic account is inadequate and that the reason for the use of the perfect must be inferred pragmatically from the context. In their corpus of 605 examples, they found that most English present perfects receive entailed resultative or continuative interpretations:

1. **I can't come to your party tonight. I've caught the flu.** (resultative perfect—example from McCawley, 1971) (The state is that I have the flu.)

Sentence 1 is "an example of the resultative perfect reading where the direct resultant state of a past event still continues" (Nishiyama & Koenig, 2010, p. 612).

2. **I've known Max since 1960.** (continuative perfect—example from McCawley, 1971) (The state is that I know Max.)

Sentence 2 "illustrates the continuative perfect reading, in which the state denoted by the verb and its arguments holds at some interval stretching from the past into the present..." (Nishiyama & Koenig, 2010, p. 612).

They note that a further function of the perfect is to provide discourse coherence, a point to which we return in Chapter 9.

4. *Simple Past versus Past Progressive*

- a. The past progressive indicates incomplete versus complete action:
He was drowning in the lake, so the lifeguard raced into the water. (incomplete)
He drowned in the lake. (complete)
- b. Simple past sees the event as a totality with no room for change; past progressive indicates that an event has already begun and extends the event in time and thus allows for a change or its interruption:
He left when I came in.
He was leaving when I came in. (and so may have changed his mind and stayed)
- c. Permanent versus temporary state:
They lived in Baltimore all their lives. (past permanent)
They were living in Baltimore during the nineties. (past temporary)

5. *Simple Past versus Past Perfect*

- a. The past perfect is used to mark the completion of some event before a past time period:
By the end of the 1920s, women in the United States had won the right to vote.
or before another past event that is in the simple past:
Pat had blamed them for the problem before he considered all the evidence.
However, it is possible to report this same sequence with two events using just the simple past tense for both since the time adverbial *before* makes clear the sequence (cf. endnote 6):
Pat blamed them for the problem before he considered all the evidence.
Even without a time adverbial, the simple past tense can be used with both clauses if the sequence of the clauses follows the sequence of events:
Marion worked in an insurance company for 20 years and retired in 2007.
Only when the clauses report two events out of sequence or there are no time adverbials that indicate the actual order is the past perfect necessary:
When Marion became a photographer, she had finished her degree in fine arts.
- b. Sometimes the past perfect appears to mark the later rather than the earlier of the two events in a two-clause sequence (G. Stevens, personal communication):
I answered before she had asked.
She collected it before I had finished.
Notice here, though, the event in the subordinate clause was not actually completed. In this case, it appears that the past perfect is a kind of implied counterfactual, suggesting that the event in the subordinate clause was not completed or did not occur. Here again, a simple past tense will often do without a change in meaning:
I answered before she asked.

6. *Simple Future (Will) versus Other Ways of Indicating Futurity*

- a. Simple future with *will* is used for the following:
Future predictions:
Belinda will be 40 next year.
Spontaneous decision when the person has control over the action:
I'll get the phone.
- b. *Be going to* is used for the following:
Future predictions (more informal than *will*):
Belinda's going to be 40 next year.

Future intentions (based on prior decision):

Randy and Joyce are going to get married in October.

Future certainty based on current condition or present evidence:

Pauline's going to have a baby.

It's going to rain today.

- c. Present progressive is used for the following:

Future plans that have already been made:

I'm marching in the parade next week.

- d. Simple present is used for the following:

Fixed scheduled events:

We get paid next Friday.

They return home tomorrow. (especially with verbs of direction)

Subordinate clauses of time (i.e., those beginning with *when*, *after*, *before*, etc.) or condition (i.e., *provided that*, *if*, *so long as*, etc.):

If the train arrives on time, we'll beat rush hour getting home.

Some of these uses are very close, and difficulties may arise accordingly. Here are three observations that may help to distinguish some uses:

1. The distinction between future scheduled events and future plans is sometimes indiscernible, and the same event can be referred to either way—simple present or present progressive. However, the simple present is more formal and impersonal and is not very common except with travel arrangements and fixed timetables:

Aunt Jeanne arrives today.

Aunt Jeanne is arriving today.

2. The present progressive is very common and sometimes overlaps with *be going to*. The present progressive, however, emphasizes that the arrangements have already been made, whereas *be going to* focuses more on the speaker's plans or intentions:

I'm staying at the Marriott.

I'm going to stay at the Marriott.

Of course, the present progressive is not likely to be used to express the future with stative verbs or where the subject is inanimate:

***The red car is belonging to me tomorrow.**

The red car is going to belong to me tomorrow.

***That tree is falling tomorrow.**

That tree is going to fall tomorrow.

or any time when no planning or preparation can guarantee the outcome:

***We are winning the tennis match next weekend.**

3. *Will* and *be going to* are sometimes interchangeable when *be going to* expresses the speaker's certainty and *will* is used to make a strong prediction. However, since *be going to* is a present-tense form, it is used especially when there is evidence in the present to support the prediction; this is not necessarily the case with *will*.

Mark is going to be tall like his dad.

?Mark will be tall like his dad.

And they also differ in that *will* is used for quick, "on-the-spot" decisions, whereas *be going to* is used with more premeditated ones:

What can I give Jill for her birthday? Oh, I know. I'll get her that new novel.

Oh, I know. ?I'm going to get her that new novel.

In their corpus of Canadian English, Torres Cacoullos and Walker (2009) discovered that *will* and *be going to* were dominant among morphosyntactic markers of future. Interestingly, the reduced form *gonna* was almost twice as frequent as *be going to*. They conclude that the difference among the four forms (simple present, present progressive, *will*, and *be going to*) cannot be attributed to temporal distance or certainty. Instead, after each of the four was introduced into the language, it occupied a lexical or pragmatic “niche.” For instance, simple present for future time occurred most often with motion verbs, especially *go*, and for scheduled events. They also found that particular lexical collocations favored certain forms (*What’s gonna happen? X’ll never X*). They offer an explanation for the “layering” (Hopper, 1991) over time of this area of the tense-aspect system, a layering that is typical with the future in many different languages. Given that the future is used for an event that has not yet transpired, they suggest that speakers are well served by having different options in order to reflect their attitudes about the future. “When more than one construction develops within the same grammatical domain, there remain niches in which one or the other is more likely to be conventionalized... [thus] the variation [among the constructions] is largely sustained and shaped by particular constructions... bearing different nuances of meaning...” (Torres Cacoullos & Walker, 2009, p. 349).

7. *Simple Future versus Future Progressive*

- a. The future progressive allows for the possibility of change with regard to some future event:

We’ll go to Everglades National Park on our vacation. (definite plan)

We’ll be going to Everglades National Park on our vacation. (less definite in that it allows for a change in plans; i.e., *We’ll be going to Everglades National Park unless we run out of time.*)

We will offer that class next semester. (more definite)

We will be offering that class next semester.¹⁰ (more tentative in that it allows for change—i.e., its cancellation if not enough students enroll in it)

In Nesselhauf and Römer’s (2007) analysis, 1,117 instances of the progressive with future time reference were analyzed from the British National Corpus, spoken corpus. The researchers found a wide variety of verbs used, though not surprisingly, these verbs were ones depicting “conscious human agency” (Leech, 2004), e.g., *going, coming, doing, getting*, etc.

8. *Simple Future versus Future Perfect*

- a. As do the other perfect aspects, the future perfect marks an event/activity that is complete prior to some other time (in this case, the future), or complete prior to some other future event:

By the year 2030, the information superhighway will have become accessible to all.

Megan will have decided on a career by the time she completes her studies.

- b. Simple future alone suggests that the event/activity begins with the time mentioned:

The information superhighway will become accessible to all by the year 2030.

Megan will decide on a career when she completes her studies.

SOME ADDITIONAL FACTS REGARDING USE

In the next chapter, we deal comprehensively with the modal system of English. However, it is worth calling attention at this point to some modals and phrasal modals whose functions relate to the uses of the tense and aspect markers. We would like to make three observations here.

First, although we have already shown a number of ways to talk about future events and states, many modals, in addition to *will*, and phrasal modals, in addition to *be going to*, can be used for this purpose as well. Here are just a few of them:

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <i>may, could, might</i> | It <i>may/could/might</i> rain tomorrow. (less certain than <i>will</i>) |
| <i>be to</i> | I <i>am to</i> leave at 7 A.M. tomorrow morning. |
| <i>be about to</i> | Look out! You're <i>about to</i> step in a puddle. |
| <i>be supposed to</i> | We're <i>supposed to</i> go on a field trip tomorrow, but the weather forecast doesn't look good. |

Second, meanings differ among these, and we explore them in the next chapter on modals, as we will the phrasal modal *used to* and the modal *would* to express past habits:

When we were children, we *used to* swing for hours. We *would* stop only when we were called for dinner.

Third, we note that past form of the phrasal modal *be going to* can be used to talk about failed future plans from a past perspective:

Pam *was going to* play tennis this weekend, but she sprained her ankle.

Conclusion

This ends our analysis of the form, meaning, and use of the verb tense-aspect system as it operates at the sentence level. We hope that this treatment has helped demonstrate some of the systematicity underlying what might seem at first to be disparate facts. Much more of the systematic nature of English tense-aspect is revealed when we examine the use of the tense-aspect system at the discourse level in Chapter 9.

From our perspective, the long-term challenge of learning the English tense-aspect system centers around what we have termed “the boundary problem.” In this regard, it is important that as new tense-aspect combinations are introduced, they are contrasted with what has been presented previously. We have spent time examining the core meanings of the aspects and tenses because we feel that some of the difficulty of discerning the differences between pairs of tense-aspect combinations can be mitigated if students can first be taught to associate the core meanings with the forms; then, they can be helped to understand the more peripheral uses that are not as easily explicable from a core-meaning perspective. Furthermore, while it is tempting to introduce the present progressive by teaching students to associate it with events that are happening this very minute (because its meaning can be so easily demonstrated through actions this way), this is only part of the story of the present progressive and may be confusing to students in the long run. It may be more important for you to help your students gain an understanding of the core meanings of the tenses and aspects before going on to work on the wider application of these forms.

Teaching Suggestions

- Form.** An inductive approach to teaching the form of English tense-aspect combinations is to provide students with naturalistic data in which has somehow been enhanced (Sharwood Smith, 1993) in order to make the verb endings more salient. You might try, for example, giving your students short reading passages with certain verb endings boldfaced or italicized. You could do this for a period of time before ever formally drawing students' attention to any particular tense-aspect combination.
- Form.** ESL/EFL students will need to learn the irregular past tense and past participle forms. One suggestion for practicing these is to play the game of Concentration. Each

group of four or five students will need a set of 30 cards. On 15 of them, write the base form of the verb; on the other 15, write the past tense or past participle.

Shuffle the cards and place them face down, forming a grid of 6 cards down and 5 across. Students take turns turning over 2 cards at a time. If the cards match—that is, if the base form and past tense or past participle are of the same verb—the student keeps the pair of cards. They should then use the past tense or past participle in a sentence to see if they can use it correctly. If they do not match, the cards must be replaced, face down, in their original spots. When all the pairs have been matched, the student with the most cards wins. This game can be replayed from time to time as new verbs are introduced.

3. **Meaning.** To teach meaning, we want students to *associate* a form and its meaning. For example, you might bring in a color wheel, or draw one on the board, for practicing the unchanging fact/state core meaning of the simple present tense. Have students make statements about how to form other colors from the primary ones and other combinations:

Teacher: What do red and blue make?

Student: Red and blue make purple.

Teacher: What do black and white make?

Student: Black and white make gray.

Teacher: What do all the colors together make?

Student: All the colors together make black.

Teacher: Now make as many sentences as you can with the English words for colors.

4. **Meaning.** One way of getting students to associate forms and meanings is to teach them certain adverbials that frequently occur with particular tenses. For example, give students a list of three adverbials that commonly go together with the present tense-aspect combinations:

| <i>Simple Present</i> | <i>Present Perfect</i> | <i>Present Progressive</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| every (day) | for X days | this day; these days |
| once a week | up until now | at the moment |
| on (Wednesday) | since (Monday) | today |

Next, give them a blank monthly calendar for the current month. Read to them a paragraph, such as the following, with Jill's activities and appointments for the month. Ask the students to pencil them in.

During the month of _____, Jill is very busy. She goes to class every weekday and studies on the weekends too. She has tests once a week on Fridays. These days she is also working. She works on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings after school. She is not working this evening (Wednesday), though, because she is not feeling well. She has been sick since Monday. She has missed school and work for two days . . .

Finally, give students new blank calendars and have them work in pairs to write down their partner's monthly activities.

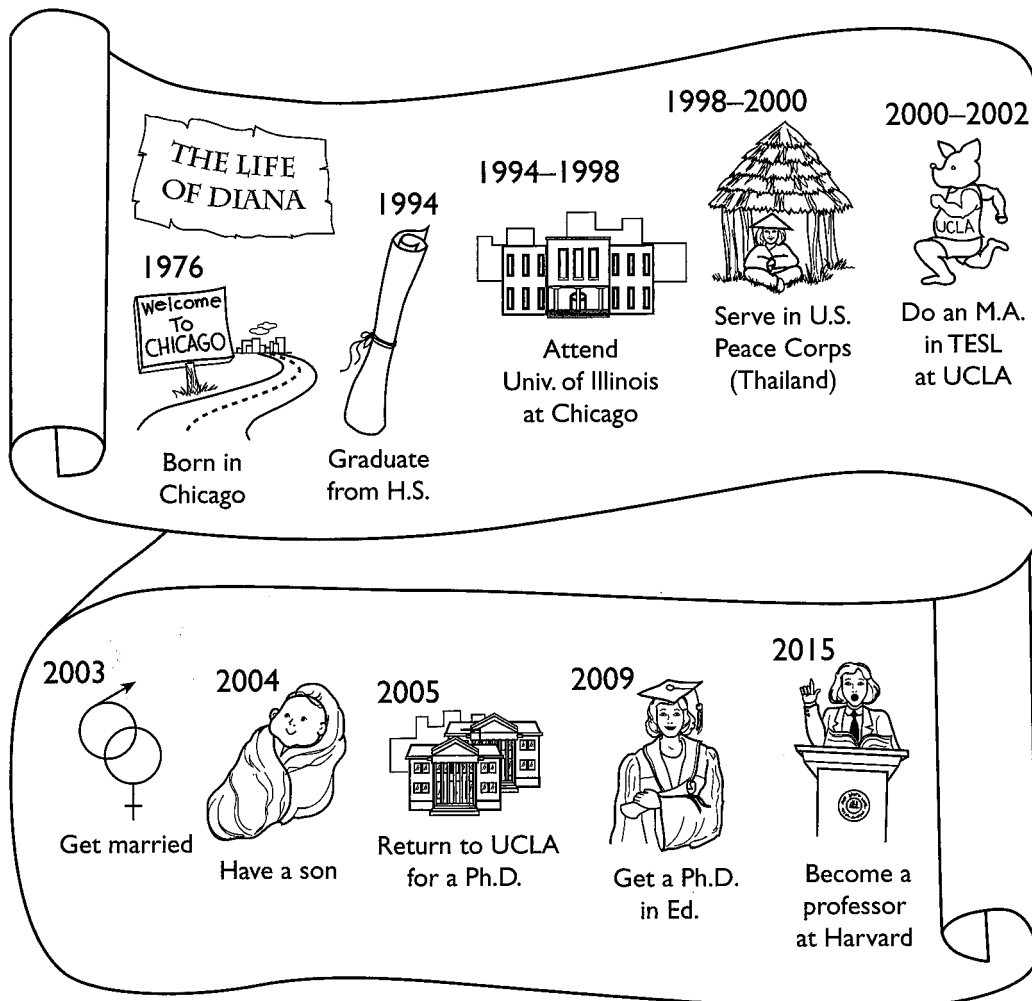
5. **Meaning.** To teach students to associate meaning with verb forms, you can use a real or imaginary biography that details the events in someone's life. This can be effectively presented in the form of a scroll, which you can slowly unwind as you ask students questions. For example, you might ask questions such as the following, which help students understand the meaning of the perfect progressives:

a. Present perfect progressive: *It's 1990. (For) how long has Diana been living in Chicago?*

b. Past perfect progressive: *In 1996, (for) how long had Diana been attending the University of Illinois?*

- c. Future perfect progressive: *In 2007, (for) how many years will Diana have been working on her Ph.D.?*

Students can create scrolls of their own lives and ask and answer each other's questions.



6. **Use.** To have students see the difference between the simple past and the past progressive, have them think of a famous historical event that took place during their lifetimes. Ask a student to say what his/her event was, where she/he was, and then ask other students to tell what they were doing at the time. Have them use the following frames:

When I heard about X, I was Y. (e.g., in college)

When I heard about X, I was ___-ing... (e.g., driving in my car)

7. **Use.** Another problem students commonly wrestle with is choosing between *will* and *be going to* in context. Dalglish, Joshee, and Holzer (personal communication) recommend that the teacher write the following two sentences on the board:

She is going to dive into the water.

She will dive into the water.

Show students a picture of a woman perched on the end of a diving board and leaning forward, and ask students which sentence correctly describes the picture. The students may intuitively know that the use of *will* in this context is not appropriate. Help them to see that *be going to* here is more appropriate because the woman's posture and position at the end of the diving board indicates a preplanned activity for which there is evidence. *Will*, on the other hand, expresses intention at the immediate moment of decision when the person has control over the action. Next ask students to create appropriate contexts for each sentence of each pair below:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a. I'll sell my car. | I'm going to sell my car. |
| b. I'll buy her a necklace. | I'm going to buy her a necklace. |
| c. I'll have an omelet and a salad. | I'm gonna have an omelet and a salad. |

8. **Use.** To help students practice one difference in usage between the simple past and the present perfect, G. Parulis and F. Cook (personal communication) suggest that students role-play a job interview.

A: Have you ever { used Photoshop
done any computer programming
published anything } ?

B: { No, I haven't, but I have edited a newsletter. I worked . . .
Yes, I have. I worked . . .

For students who are less advanced, you could work on the same use difference between present perfect and past by asking each student to think up one question to ask another student in the class, using the frame *Have you ever... ?* If the student to whom the question is asked answers affirmatively, then the first student asks a follow-up question. For example:

A: Have you ever eaten couscous?

B: Yes, I have.

A: Really? When did you eat it?

B: I ate some last week at a Moroccan restaurant downtown.

9. **Use.** Collins (2007) suggests giving students three sentences and three contexts. The students are asked to pick the correct sentence for each context. Afterward, they discuss the reasons for their choices.

Sentence a: Somebody was in the apartment.

Sentence b: Somebody has been in the apartment.

Sentence c: Somebody is in the apartment.

Context 1: Two people living in the same apartment wake up at 3 A.M.:

Wake up! The dog just barked and I hear footsteps downstairs. _____. There's a light on, too. I'm going to call the police.

Context 2: Two people arrive home from a two-week vacation:

Look at this! My dresser drawer is open and the shoes in my closet are scattered all over the floor. _____. I'm going to call the police.

Context 3: A person arrives home from a two-week vacation and goes back to work. She is talking to a co-worker:

It's good to be home. Florence is a lovely city, and we'd love to go back. The only problem is that now we have to replace all the locks on the doors to our apartment. We didn't have anything stolen, but we know that _____. The police think changing the locks is a good idea.

10. **Use.** In this activity from Collins (2007), students create their own contexts to distinguish sentences with stative verbs in the simple past and present:

She liked horror films.

She likes horror films.

and simple and progressive forms in the present:

The dog digs holes in the neighbor's garden.

The dog is digging holes in the neighbor's garden!

Collins makes the point that in creating contexts, students get to make choices about tense and aspect to convey meanings that they want to express. Any feedback from the teacher will thus be focused on messages the students have created themselves. A further advantage is that in sharing their contexts with the class, everyone is exposed to several examples of the target forms in appropriate contexts.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. *Provide original example sentences to illustrate the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples:*

a. simple future

e. stative verb

b. present perfect

f. simple present

c. past progressive

g. accomplishment verb

d. past perfect

h. present perfect progressive

2. *Do the following sentences differ at all with regard to the ordering of events?*

a. I had finished my homework before I practiced the piano.

b. I finished my homework before I practiced the piano.

Give a reason for your answer.

3. *The word since does not usually occur with the simple past tense. Why do you think this is so?*

4. *Compare and contrast the following pairs of sentences:*

a. I have read the book.

I have been reading the book.

b. Stan sells vacuum cleaners.

Stan is selling vacuum cleaners.

c. Did you go to Yankee Stadium?

Have you gone to Yankee Stadium?

Test your ability to apply what you know.

5. *ESL/EFL students have produced the following. How have they deviated from Standard English?*

a. *William has bought it last Saturday.

b. *I'm believing you.

c. *Help! I will fall.

d. *When Larry will come, I will go.

e. *Phyllis was lived with her parents for 20 years.

6. *ESL/EFL teachers often associate “now” with the present progressive, but consider the following:*

He goes to the store now.

Now you’ve done it!

What interpretation can you give to these sentences that will explain the tense use?

7. *Consider the following verbs of internal sensation: hurt, ache, feel, itch. Although sometimes these are considered a subcategory of stative verbs, we have not included them because of their special nature with regard to progressive aspect. Explain.*
8. *Apart from the British and American English difference mentioned in the section “Adverbs of Tense and Time,” earlier in this chapter, just and already can occur with the present perfect and the simple past. Is there a difference? Would the following sentences occur in different contexts?*
- a. Did you just hear the news about the flooding in Georgia?
- b. Have you just heard the news about the flooding in Georgia?
9. *In American English, sometimes the past participle gotten appears to be used the same way as got.*

Has he gotten/got over his illness?

Other times, they appear to have different meanings:

He has got the following ingredients.

He has gotten the following ingredients.

Can you explain the difference?

10. *If a student asks you what the difference between the following two sentences is, how would you answer?*
- a. I have been hearing that melody over and over again.
- b. I have been listening to that melody over and over again.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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Endnotes

1. In some British English grammars, though, the pattern is preserved by referring to tense first and then aspect; i.e., “present simple.”
2. For a list of the spelling rules that apply to forming the present participle, see Badalamenti and Henner-Stanchina (2007).
3. According to Torres Cacoullos and Walker (2009), the earliest future form was the simple present, followed by the development of the progressive in early Modern English; *will* later developed out of a verb of desire (the Old English equivalent of *want*), and the phrasal modal construction, *be going to*, arose from a verb of motion in a purpose-clause construction beginning in the 15th to 16th centuries (p. 323).
4. Even though the whole sentence expresses future, the present tense is used in the subordinate clause. This follows a general principle of historical linguistics that holds that historically older inflectional/grammatical forms and word orders are preserved in subordinate clauses longer than in independent clauses. Since Old English had only two tenses (present and past) and used the present tense to express future time, this principle seems to apply here.
5. Here and with the host’s offer and sales clerk’s question on page 110, the past-tense marker has taken over the subjunctive function in English.
6. Notice, though, that the simple present (*finishes*) could also work here (L. Gray, personal communication). This is in keeping with the fact that the use of perfect aspect is sometimes optional when its notion of prior can be made explicit by other means—such as, the use of *until* here. You will encounter the optionality of the perfect again when we contrast the use of the simple past with that of the past perfect.
7. This chart has been somewhat altered from the one that appeared in Andersen and Shirai (1994). Also, Dowty (1979) has shown that there is overlap between the accomplishment and activity categories with certain verbs such as *draw* in sentences such as the following:
He drew the picture in an hour. (accomplishment)
He drew the picture for an hour. (activity)
For this reason, Dowty argues that classification should occur with the whole verb phrase. While we would not quarrel with his assessment, for our purposes this categorization of verbs is sufficient.
8. There is a dialect of North American English, spoken mainly in the South, that uses *anymore* to mean *lately* or *these days* (J. Scanlon, personal communication).
I don’t have time to read the newspaper. I only read books for school anymore.
9. Although it affirms the persistence of the past in the present, *still* often implies a negative evaluation:
Is Harold still writing his thesis? (He shouldn’t be; he should have finished it long ago.)
10. Example from N. Gross, personal communication.

Modal Auxiliaries and Related Phrasal Forms

Introduction

In this chapter, we conclude our discussion of AUX by addressing the modal auxiliary (M) and phrasal modal (pm) forms. Modal auxiliaries and phrasal modals express modality, a semantic concept that centers on beliefs and attitudes regarding potentiality or possibility rather than on purported fact. We see potential in assessments of likelihood, social directives, and statements of ability:

The exam *may* be difficult.

(There exists the potential that the exam will be challenging.)

You *should* be studying harder.

(You have the potential to follow this advice and put more effort into your current studies.)

I *can* study all night during the semester.

(I have the potential to study rather than go to bed at night during the semester.)

Without the modal auxiliaries, the sentences above become straightforward statements:

The exam is difficult.

You are studying harder.

I study all night during the semester.

Of course, there are other ways to express modality in the form of adverbs, adjectives, verbs, and nouns:

The exam is *potentially* difficult.

It is *possible* that the exam is difficult.

I *imagine* that the exam is difficult.

There is a *possibility* that the exam is difficult.

This chapter limits itself to the consideration of modal auxiliary verbs (or simply *modals*) and phrasal modals. To be sure, modals and phrasal modals pose learning challenges to ESL/EFL learners. These challenges exist, as we shall see, in each of the three dimensions: form, meaning, and use.

Modal auxiliaries are among the more difficult structures ESL/EFL teachers have to deal with. One of the reasons for this is the form of modals. Some of your students, who have been told time and time again that present-tense verbs with third person singular subjects require an *-s* ending, overgeneralize this rule to modals—for example, **He cans play tennis*. In English modal auxiliaries (*can, may, shall, will*, etc.) are distinguished from other auxiliary verbs (*be, have, do*), as well as from ordinary verbs by their lack of tense and their resultant lack of subject-verb agreement; that is, modals do not inflect.

In English, modals are derived from verbs that *did* carry tense and take agreement markers during a much earlier stage of the language. Other languages, such as German, French, and Spanish, still carry out tense-marking and/or agreement operations on their equivalents of English modal verbs. It is thus important to emphasize to learners that English no longer inflects modals for tense and number.

Another formal property of modals that may cause your students some trouble is that modals directly precede a verb without the intervening infinitive *to* that is usually required (the exception being “serial verb constructions,” such as *come get* and *go see*, which are limited in number) when two ordinary verbs follow each other in sequence:

| <i>Modal + Verb</i> | <i>Verb + Verb</i> |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| I can go. | I plan to go. |
| *I can to go. | *I plan go. |

Many of your students will treat modals like ordinary verbs and produce errors by using a superfluous infinitive *to*: **Jack must to study harder*; **We should to return the book*.

Another source of difficulty with the form of modals, of course, may be your students' native language(s). Not all languages have modal auxiliaries; in those that do not, regular verbs or adjectives/adverbs are used to express the meanings and functions that modals have in English. Students speaking such a first language may feel the need to inflect English modals as if they were ordinary verbs.

While the formal properties may seem rather complicated, an additional problem is how to convey to ESL/EFL students the exact meanings of modals, phrasal modals, and modal-like forms. Paraphrases are often too wordy for students at beginning levels. Furthermore, each modal exhibits a range of different meanings. For instance, would you offer the same definition of *may* in the following sentences?

- The exam may be difficult.**
- You may start the exam now.**
- You may not use a dictionary on the exam.**

Keeping track of modal meanings and forms can be an overwhelming task for learners, especially as some textbooks present modal forms along with their different meanings in lengthy, decontextualized lists. Textbooks may also group modals with a speech act, such as persuading, without exploring the subtle meaning differences between modal choices within persuasion. This can give the impression that modals are idiosyncratic (Tyler, 2012) and leave learners with a fragmented view of the modals.

Such presentation also poses challenges for ESL/EFL students' efforts to master the use of modals. Failure to choose context-appropriate modals may leave L2 speakers of English sounding overly direct (even rude) or excessively polite. Cross-linguistic differences in modal use have been found in both speech (e.g., Lin, 2009) and writing (e.g., Hinkel, 1995).

The Form of Modals

MODALS ARE TENSELESS

In this grammar, we describe modals formally as tenseless auxiliaries that take no subject-verb agreement and no infinitive *to* before the following verb. That said, we do acknowledge that modals derive historically from ordinary verb forms inflected for either present or past tense because this historically-based relationship still has some semantic implications (see our discussion of meanings of modals):

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Historical</i> | <i>Historical</i> |
| <i>Present Tense</i> | <i>Past Tense</i> |
| can | could |
| will | would |
| may | might |
| shall | should |
| ∅ ← | must, (had to)¹ |

It could be argued that the present to past tense shift does occur in reported speech, e.g.,

May: I will go to New Orleans.

Stan: May said that she would go to New Orleans.

However, as we demonstrate in Chapter 33, shifting of tenses in reported speech is often not followed by English speakers. The only other time that a present and past relationship is maintained is between *can* and *could*, where *could* is used for remote past.

I can't speak French now, but I could when I was a child.

However the different time references do not hold for the other modal pairs. In fact, it is the case today that so-called present tense modals may refer to (present) reasoning about events in the past, and that so-called past tense modals may refer to present or future time:

Jim may have been late last night. (past event)

That could be Sara. (present meaning)

You should see a doctor. (future meaning)

Given the fact that the “present tense” modals would be the only present tense verb auxiliaries in English that do not take the third person singular inflection, there are few valid syntactic reasons for maintaining the historical description and ascribing past or present tense to modals.

MODALS AND THEIR PHRASAL MODAL COUNTERPARTS

Functioning semantically like modals, phrasal modals (also called *periphrastic modals*, *pseudo-modals*, or *quasi-modals*) are multiword forms ending in infinitive *to*. Every modal seems to have at least one phrasal counterpart, and some modals have several:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <i>Modal</i> | <i>Phrasal Modal</i> |
| can, could | be able to |
| will, shall | be going to, be about to, be to² |
| must | have to, have got to, need to |
| should | be supposed to |
| would (for past habit) | used to |
| may, might | be allowed to, be permitted to |

To the above list, we can add *ought to³* and *had better/best* as modal forms that lie somewhere between true modal and phrasal modal.

Notice that the phrasal modals do not exhibit the same formal properties as the true modals in that the subject-verb agreement rule must be applied (except for *used to*, which is an inflected past tense⁴) and that all phrasal modals require that a *to* infinitive precede the main verb; that is, the phrasal forms behave syntactically much more like ordinary verbs than they do like true modals.

| | | | |
|-----|--|---|------------------------|
| She | is going to is allowed to has to is supposed to is able to | } | go to Fresno tomorrow. |
|-----|--|---|------------------------|

In fact, phrasal forms developed in part because the original class of modals lost their connection to time, and the phrasal forms gave English users a way to mark tense and express modality on the same verb form. In Chapter 6, we saw examples of phrasal modals marked for tense.⁵ Phrasal modals, however, differ from lexical verbs in speech in that some have assimilated with *to*, which is often pronounced as if it were part of a single word with the verb: *gotta*⁶, *gonna*, *hasta*, *hafta*, and so on. Also, it is much more difficult to put an adverb between the verb and the *to* of a phrasal modal than between a regular verb and an infinitive *to*:

?I have often to study at night.

I try often to study at night.

Another point should be made regarding the formal properties of modals and their phrasal equivalents: The order of these constituents with respect to each other is fixed.

Orderings of modal + modal⁷ and of phrasal modal + modal cannot occur:

***We can should study hard.**

***I am able to must do the job.**

We do, however, see orderings of modal + phrasal modal:

He will have to improve his work.⁸

I might be able to go there.

We also see phrasal modal + phrasal modal:

He is going to have to improve his grades.

Sequences of three phrasal modals seem to be the upper limit (S. Weigle, personal communication):

I'm gonna have to be able to do that by Saturday.

Another point to make about the form of phrasal modals is that they occasionally appear to take perfect or progressive aspect (B. Strodt, personal communication):

Lately, he's been able to run the mile in five minutes.

I'm having to work harder to lose weight now.

Our current phrase structure rule does not account for such an order of constituents. When they occur with the aspectual markers, we must treat them syntactically as ordinary verbs taking infinitives rather than as phrasal modals. Many phrasal modals seem to be hovering somewhere between a regular verb and a true phrasal modal.

Phrasal modals have a variety of internal structures. Some of them look like another construction that consists of *be* + adjective + preposition + verb [gerund]:

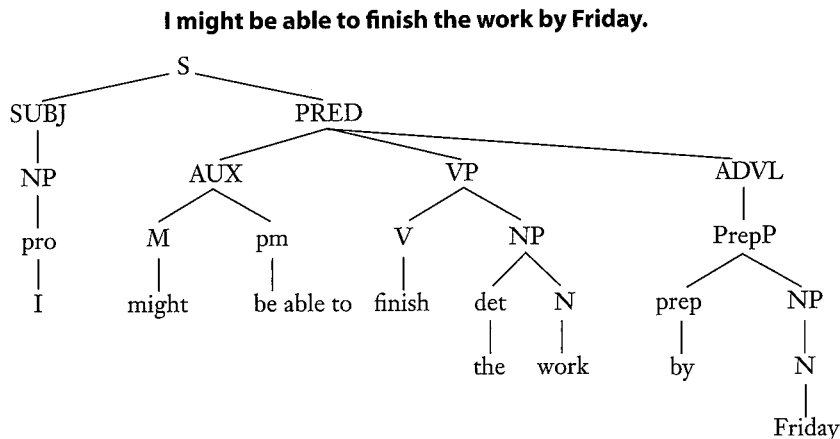
I am able to go there. (pm + verb [infinitive])

I am used to going there. (*be* + adj + prep + verb [gerund])

with the result that some learners overgeneralize the pattern with the phrasal modal:

***I am used to go there.**

Before going on to the meaning of modals, let us draw a tree for one sentence:



The Meanings of Modals

Modals are used for several reasons: to give a proposition a degree of probability, to make predictions and inferences, to express possibilities and impossibilities, to state abilities, and to perform various social functions, such as expressing politeness or indirectness when making requests, giving advice, or granting permission.

THE POLYSEMY OF LOGICAL PROBABILITY, SOCIAL INTERACTION, AND ABILITY MODALS

Many linguists and semanticists (Hofmann, 1966; Palmer, 1990; among others) have discussed modals as having at least two distinctly different functions: (1) an epistemic meaning expressing logical probability and (2) a deontic function expressing a use related to social interaction. We will use the terms *logical probability* and *social interaction* here. Consider the following examples:

It may rain tomorrow. (*may* expresses a degree of logical probability that is weak rather than strong)

You may leave the room. (*may* expresses granting of permission and thus accomplishes a social interaction)

Like *may*, other modals can express both logical probability and social interaction. Such polysemy (e.g., *may* used to express permission in one context and logical probability in another) can cause confusion for ESL/EFL learners.

Complicating matters further, a third meaning exists for modals. Notice how *can* below expresses neither permission nor probability:

Usain Bolt can run very fast. (*can* expresses an ability)

We will use the term *ability/tendency* to describe this type of meaning. Given that *can* may at other times be used to grant permission (*You can leave the room*) or to deny probability (*It can't be raining now; the sun is out*), we again see polysemy.

The different types of modality and the issue of polysemy present a major challenge to ESL/EFL learners. Consider the range of modals used in the three basic types of modal meaning that we have so far identified:

social interaction: **can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would**

ability/tendency: **can, could, would** (for past habit)

logical probability: **can** (in negation and questions only), **could, may, might, must, should, will, would**

Notice this list includes true modals only. Adding the phrasal modals makes it even more complicated.

CORE MEANINGS OF COMMON MODALS AND PHRASAL MODALS

Work in cognitive linguistics (e.g., Sweetser, 1990; Talmy, 2000) has attempted to provide a unified account of the modal system. It is argued that, at its most basic level, the meaning of each modal reflects a dynamic relationship of forces. The forces are extended metaphorically to the different modal meanings. Consider the following examples of *must* used for social interaction and for logical probability from Radden and Dirven (2007, p. 244):

You must go home.

This must be right.

Must, in both sentences, conveys a strong force. In the first sentence, the force is in the authority of the speaker; in the second sentence, the force is in the power of evidence.

The core meanings presented below are based on Sweetser (1990) and Tyler (2012). We include some of the more frequent phrasal modals in this list:

| (PHRASAL) MODAL | CORE MEANING |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>can</i> | potential force |
| ability/tendency | I hear that you can play the guitar. |
| social interaction | You can play the guitar right now (if you'd like). |
| logical probability | You can't have played the guitar just now (because there's no instrument here). |
| <i>could</i> | weakened potential force |
| ability/tendency | Last year, you could run a 5-minute mile. |
| social interaction | You could try running for exercise. |
| logical probability | Running could be good for you. |
| <i>may</i> | potential external barrier to force removed |
| social interaction | You may use the pool. (I exercise my power to give you access to the pool.) |
| logical probability | The pool may be open. (It's possible that the barrier to entering the pool has been removed.) |
| <i>might</i> | weakened potential barrier to force removed |
| social interaction | You might try swimming for exercise. |
| logical probability | Swimming might be good exercise. |
| <i>must</i> | irresistible force |
| social interaction | You must return the library books. |
| logical probability | The books must be overdue by now. |

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>ought to</i> | force of social obligation |
| social interaction | You ought to return the library books (because it is your responsibility as a member of the library to return books on time). |
| logical probability | This ought to be right. |
| <i>have to</i> | external force imposing obligation |
| social interaction | You have to return the library books (because of the library's rules). |
| logical probability | This has to be right. |
| <i>need to</i> | internal force imposing obligation |
| social interaction | You need to return the library books (because you don't want to break the library's rules). |
| <i>should</i> | weakened obliging force |
| social interaction | You should go to the library. |
| logical probability | That should be the librarian. (upon seeing someone behind the counter) |
| <i>will</i> | force of commitment |
| social interaction | I will go to the library. |
| logical probability | That will be the librarian. (upon seeing someone behind the counter) |
| <i>would</i> | weakened force of commitment |
| ability/tendency | I would go to the library regularly (when I was young). |
| social interaction | I would go to the library (if I were not in this traffic jam). |
| logical probability | That would be the librarian. (upon seeing someone behind the counter) |

The extension of physical and social meanings for modals to logical probability meanings is possible because, as Sweetser (1990) points out, "we generally use the language of the external world to apply to the internal world, which is metaphorically structured as parallel to the external world. Thus we view our reasoning processes as being subject to compulsions, obligations, and other modalities, just as our real-world actions are subject to modalities of the same sort" (p. 50). As we interact socially, we are influenced by the people and physical contexts around us. As we make predictions and draw conclusions, we are influenced by the forces of evidence and counterevidence before us.

The list above is meant to illustrate the semantic connection across the modal areas of social interaction, ability/tendency, and logical probability. In the section in this chapter on the use of modals, we will explore how to choose one modal form over others within each area.

MODALS AND NEGATION

Modals and phrasal forms interact with *not* in interesting ways. Usually the negation of a modal and the negative of the corresponding phrasal modal have parallel semantic effects:

They may not smoke here. / They are not allowed to smoke here.

I cannot do it. / I'm not able to do it.

He will not do it. / He's not going to do it.

You should not lie. / You're not supposed to lie.

However, the following are clearly distinct:

You must not go. / You don't have to go.¹⁰

In this immediately preceding pair, the modal expresses prohibition, while the phrasal form offers the addressee a choice (i.e., you can go, but it's not necessary). We see a difference here in the scope of negation: *not* has narrower scope in the first example than in the second. That is, we can paraphrase the sentences as *It is necessary that you not go* and *It is not necessary that you go*, respectively. *Must not* imposes an obligation to refrain from doing something, whereas *don't have to* removes an obligation of restraint, thereby granting the choice to do or not do something (Radden & Dirven, 2007). See Chapter 10 for more on negation and scope.

The Use of Modals and Phrasal Modals

Given that each modal form conveys a range of meanings, and given that different modal forms often convey similar meanings, it is no surprise that the dimension of use poses significant challenges for ESL/EFL learners. Choosing appropriate modals requires the consideration of a variety of factors.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF MODALS

Giving Advice

One major system in the social interactional use of modals involves the giving of advice. Notice that the systematicity lies in the fact that we can order the modals and phrasal modals according to the speaker's degree of authority or the urgency of the advice. For example:

| | |
|--|---|
| You (must/have to/have got to/need to) see a doctor. | ↑ (Speaker's authority or urgency of the message increases, not necessarily in equal increments.) |
| You (should/ought to/had better/had best) see a doctor. | |
| You (might/could) see a doctor. | |

Might/Could. There does not seem to be much difference between the choice of *might* or *could*. Both signal that the speaker is making a tentative suggestion. It is worth noting that *may* and *can* are absent from this list, as their prime use is for permission within social interactions (see below).

Should/Ought To/Had Better/Had Best. Advice becomes stronger with the use of *should*, *ought to*, or *had better/had best*. The modals in the second sentence below may suggest the possibility of unpleasant consequences, whereas the first two are much more neutral:

You should /ought to return that book to the library.
You had { better / best } return that book to the library.

The use of *had better/had best*, however, does not always imply negative consequences; this is especially true if the utterance is self-directed: *I'd better do the dusting before the vacuuming.*

Should/Ought To/Be Supposed To. As for the choice between *should* and *ought to*, Bouscaren, Chuquet, and Danon-Boileau (1992) argue that *ought to* reflects a judgment based on external rules (social conventions, institutions) and *should* reflects a speaker's judgment based on personal criteria (p. 68):

I felt that I ought to be showing these people where to find food. But should I? If I were to lead them . . . [(J. Wyndham, *The Day of the Triffids*) context: humanity has become blind except for the narrator who is a witness to the disaster]

In contexts where we would expect to find *should*, we at times find *be supposed to*. Gaskill (1978), citing transcribed oral data, argues that the difference between *should* and *be supposed to* is that *should* invokes internal authority or a higher authority, whereas *be supposed to* invokes a very special type of impersonal external authority, an appeal to some predetermined schedule, plan, or perspective:

Well, if you'll notice, most teachers say you should, uh, take an interest in your subject—you should apply it to life. And you try to, but somehow it doesn't work in most cases.

Physics is, they say, formula plugging—whenever you say that it's formula plugging the teachers always get mad at you and say you're not supposed to look at it like that.

(Carterette and Jones, 1974, p. 406; punctuation added)

It seems both Bouscaren et al. and Gaskill argue that *should* expresses someone's internal moral judgment or a higher moral authority; the difference between the external force of *ought to* and *be supposed to* is that *ought to* is a marker of some general external moral or social standard, whereas use of *be supposed to* refers to explicit, externally agreed-upon standards, schedules, or expectations that may be restricted to a certain group.

Must/Have To/Have Got To/Need To. We find a range of modal forms for offering strong advice. There appears to be a major distinction between *must* and the alternative forms. *Must* clearly signals the speaker's authority.

You must go home.

A pragmatically weakened form of *must* exists in situations where an offer or invitation initially refused is recast as urgent advice to make it more emphatic:

You must have another piece of pie!

The other modal choices for strong advice allow the speaker to keep his/her authority off stage. In choosing *have to*, *have got to*, or *need to*, an impression is given that the advice is more objective than subjective. Comparing the frequency of *must*, *have to*, and *have got to* relative to one another in current spoken American English, Radden and Dirven (2007) report the following percentages of use: *must* (8 percent), *have to* (39 percent), and *(have) got to* (53 percent) (p. 249). Some (Hoye, 2005; Leech, 2003; Smith, 2003) have raised the possibility that such numbers reflect a democratization process, whereby speech participants display more equality toward one another. The most colloquial option among these forms is *have got to*, when pronounced as assimilated and elided *gotta*:

You gotta go home.

Of course, at the highest level of speaker authority and urgency are commands. While the imperative form (see Chapter 12) is typically used to issue these, it is sometimes possible to use future-oriented modal forms:

You are to see the doctor tomorrow.

You WILL see the doctor tomorrow. (where *will* is stressed)

You are going to see the doctor tomorrow.

If these sentences are followed by *I don't care what you say*, they are clearly being used as commands rather than simply to report a future event.

Perfect Aspect to Show Past. Use of the perfect aspect allows speakers to make suggestions about the past (i.e., to comment on what did not happen as if it was a possibility at the time that something else happened):

You should have gone to the doctor.

You ought to have gone to the doctor.

You could have gone to the doctor.

You might have gone to the doctor.

Notice that it is not possible to use modals at the top of the authority/urgency scale (*must, have to/have got to/need to*) to express this meaning, perhaps, because events in the past can no longer be urgent.

Negative Advice. Advice can, of course, be negative as well as positive. Less formal and weaker expressions of negative advice often involve *should* or its phrasal counterparts with *not*, although other forms are possible:

You must not say things like that.

You can't say things like that.

You had better/ had best not say things like that.

You ought not (to) say things like that. (rare)

You shouldn't say things like that.

You're not supposed to say things like that.

You don't $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{have} \\ \text{need} \end{array} \right\}$ to say things like that.

Stronger negative advice



Weaker negative advice

While the modal forms in the first two sentences above are used for strong negative advice, they may also be used for outright prohibition:

You must not watch TV now.

You can't watch TV now.

Again, each choice conveys a slightly different position taken by the speaker. According to Radden and Dirven (2007), *must not* suggests that the speaker has a strong personal reason to prohibit television, and *can't* implies that the speaker is basing the prohibition on factors outside of him/herself.

From our experience, introducing modals in this relative fashion to ESL/EFL students is far more enlightening than simply introducing each form individually and ascribing a number of distinctive meanings and functions to it.

Making Requests

The other major system in the social use of modals entails making requests. These can be requests of a general nature,

Will/Would } you help me with this math problem?
Can/Could }

or specific requests for permission:

May/Might } I leave the room now?
Can/Could }

Responding to Requests. Although both historical present and past forms of these modals can be used in making requests, only the historical present tense forms are likely to be used in responses to requests:

To general requests: **Yes, I can/*could; No, I can't/*couldn't.**

Yes, I will/*would; No, I won't/*wouldn't.

To requests for permission: **Yes, you may/*might; No, you may not/*might not.**

Yes, you can/*could; No, you can't/*couldn't.

The reasons for this distinction is that the historical past forms of modals are considered more polite and less presumptuous than the historical present forms, and thus the person making the request will often use the historical past tense forms to “soften” the request; however, the person being addressed is expected to respond directly and thus uses the less deferential historical present forms. Also, the person responding to a request usually does not want to make the response sound conditional, which is a possible result if the historical past form of the modal is used:

A: (Can/Could) you help me with this math problem?

B: Yes, I could (if you would wait a few minutes while I finish this work).

If ESL/EFL students learned to soften requests by employing the historical past tense forms of the modals, they might find their requests being better received. For example,

Could (instead of Can) I talk to you for a minute?

Would (instead of Will) you open the door?

Requests for Permission. When asking for permission, the selection of *may* or *can* is socially significant:

Can/May I talk to you for a minute?

May clearly signals the authority of the person granting permission. Thus, the greater the addressee’s degree of formal authority (as perceived by the speaker or projected by the addressee) and the greater the formality of the situation, the more likely the use of *may*. ESL/EFL learners, however, should be made aware that *can* is used much more frequently than *may* for permission (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999). Perhaps this is the result of speakers seeking to equalize the relationship part of the above-mentioned democratization process.

Note that while modals can be used in making requests, phrasal modals are generally used not to make requests, but to ask literal questions:

Will/Would you open the door? (possible request)

Are you going to open the door? (literal question)

There is, however, a modal-like phrase that can be used to make a polite request:

Would¹¹ you mind turning down the volume on that radio?

The interesting thing here is that *do* serves as an informal, more direct, and less polite substitute for *would* in this phrase, whereas *will* is ungrammatical:

Do you mind turning down the volume on that radio?

***Will you mind turning down the volume on that radio?**

As Ney (1978) points out, all request modals show differences in meaning when the negative *not* is contracted to the modal, as opposed to when it is uncontracted and precedes the main verb:

Won’t you please get into the pool? (Please do get in.)

Will you please not get into the pool? (Please do not get in.)

Couldn’t I please go to the party? (I want to go; please let me.)

Could I please not go to the party? (I don’t want to; please don’t force me.)

When the negative is contracted with the modal, it serves to amplify or strengthen the request that something should be done; however, if the negative is uncontracted and precedes the verb, the request has the opposite meaning: that something not be done.

Shall. One modal that we have not discussed is *shall*. Since it is used infrequently in North American English, we prefer to teach this form to most of our students for reception rather than production. For advanced students, we point out that when *shall* does occur, it is usually

found in requests for a decision or for advice from the addressee, in tags with *let's*, or in statements establishing new topics:

Shall I call her? (*should* can also be used here)

Let's go, shall we?

Next, we shall discuss the difference between X and Y.

Shall does occur in some frozen formulas where it signifies an invitation or a suggestion. In such cases, *should* cannot be substituted for *shall* without a change of meaning:

Shall we dance? (= would you like to dance? i.e., an invitation)

Should we dance? (= is it advisable? i.e., a question)

In formal commands—both affirmative and negative—one occasionally encounters *shall*:

You shall report promptly at 0500 hours.

You shall not talk of such matters.

Certainly the old prescriptive rule—i.e., use *shall* to express future time with *I* and *we*; use *will* elsewhere—no longer holds true for North American English.

MODALS TO DESCRIBE ABILITY/ POTENTIAL/ TENDENCY

We use modals and phrasal modals to talk about the ability of animate subjects:

I can speak Indonesian.

Superman is able to leap tall buildings with a single bound.

In order to talk about past abilities, we use *could* or apply past tense to the phrasal modal:

I could speak Indonesian when I was young.

The Beatles were able to record many hits.

For inanimate subjects, we use the same modals to talk about possibility (or potential) rather than ability:

The bicycle's tires can lose air over the course of the day's ride.

The car is able to go faster with this fuel.

We can, of course, talk about possibility with animate subjects as well:

Today I can go to Disney World.

Today I am able to go to Disney World.

Could, *may*, and *might* are also used to express possibility or potential. Compared with *can* and *be able to*, however, they seem to suggest that there is less likelihood that the possibility will be realized. This sense of weakened possibility aligns with the core senses for these modals, which include weakened potential force for *could* and reference to barriers for *may* and *might*.

When we wish to express possibility in the past, *could* + the perfect aspect *have* (*have* + *-en*) conveys a sense of unrealized potential:

The bicycle's tires could have lost air over the course of the day's ride.

(The tires did not lose air.)¹²

Yesterday I could have gone to Disney World.

(I did not go to Disney World.)

On the other hand, the past form of *be able to* signals that any potential was actualized:

This car was able to go faster with this fuel.

(The car did go faster.)

Yesterday I was able to go to Disney World.

(I did go to Disney World.)

The Use of Can to Show Affect. There are times when *can* is used more for pragmatic reasons than for semantic ones. Instead of clearly expressing ability, it signals affect between speech participants. Kjellmer (2003) outlines four pragmatic functions for *can* when used with performative verbs (e.g., *confirm*, *assure*) and verbs of perception and cognition:

shock absorber: **I can confirm that your candidate lost the race.**

empathizer: **I can feel your pain.**

emphasizer: **I can assure you that this is an amazing car.**

qualifier: **I can understand your point, but I disagree.**

Removal of *can* from each of the above sentences would not change the basic meaning. According to Kjellmer, use of *can* allows the speaker to lessen the shock of bad news (as in the first sentence), to empathize with the listener (as in the second), to emphasize his/her assurance (as in the third), and to prepare the listener for an objection (as in the fourth).

Indeed, Park (1993) found that lack of *can* and use of the present tense is preferred in contexts that are factual, direct, and sometimes abrupt or even argumentative:

"I understand your point. Anything else?"

Sometimes the negative form of *can* with these types of verbs expresses surprise at a fact rather than conveying any literal negation of ability or possibility (Park, 1993):

"It's your birthday? I can't believe it!"

The use of *I don't believe it*, which can also express surprise, is preferred in contexts that are more factually oriented, where the speaker is being direct; it would be used rather than *can't* in those cases where the speaker does not accept the statement as true (Park, 1993).

Can for Hedging. Although *can* is used to bridge social distance in conversations, it is also used (in a more formal manner) to establish distance between a speaker and what he/she says. Radden and Dirven (2007) observe that *can* with the passive voice is particularly frequent in academic writing as a form of hedging. They note such phrases as *It can be said/noted/observed/argued/claimed/concluded* and point out that these expressions enable authors to "remain non-committal" and to appear "objective" (p. 256). See Chapter 18 for discussion of the passive voice.

Past Tendency. Turning from ability and potential to past tendency, we see the following modals used:

I used to play a lot of soccer.

I would spend every Saturday on the soccer field.

In Chapter 9 we discuss choosing between *used to* and *would* in discourse. For now, it is worth pointing out that students sometimes confuse *used to* with *be used to* and *get used to*. While *used to* suggests a factual report of past habit, *be/get used to* expresses the idea of being or growing accustomed to something. Compare the following sentences:

I used to eat hot food when I was in Thailand. (factual report of past habit)

I got used to eating hot food when I was in Thailand. (change of habit or circumstance in past)

I am used to eating hot food. (current circumstance or habit)

Note that while *used to* expresses only past habit, *be used to* and *get used to* can refer to any time frame by changing the tense of *be* or *get*. Note also that *used to* is followed by bare infinitives, while *get used to* and *be used to* are followed by gerunds.

MODALS TO EXPRESS LOGICAL PROBABILITY

When modals are used to express logical meanings, the speaker is typically making an inference or prediction. For example:

Wilbur: Someone's knocking at the door.

Gertrude: It may be Sydney.

Inference

The relevant factor for choosing modals in this domain of reasoning is the speaker's degree of certainty regarding the inference:

Wilbur: Someone's knocking.

Gertrude: That must/has to/has got to be Sydney.

That will/would/is going to be Sydney.

That should/ought to be Sydney.

That may be Sydney.

That could/might¹³ be Sydney.

High certainty



Low certainty

Notice that adjectives and adverbs can often be used to paraphrase the logical uses, but only rarely the social uses, of modal forms:

must/has to/has got to—necessarily, very certain(ly)

will/would/is going to—fairly certain(ly)

should/ought to—probable, probably, likely

may—perhaps, maybe, quite possible/ly

could/might—possible, possibly

High certainty



Low certainty

Negative Inference. Present inference can also be stated in negative terms, but this is much less frequent, and the selection and order of forms is somewhat different:

Wilbur: Someone's knocking at the door. I believe it's Sidney.

Gertrude: That might not be Sydney.

That may not be Sydney.

That won't/wouldn't be Sydney.

That can't/couldn't be Sydney.

Low possibility



Impossibility

Inferences about Past Situations. To express inferences about past situations, modals are combined with the perfect aspect:

Wilbur: Someone was asking for you.

Gertrude: That must have been Sydney.

That will/would have been Sydney.

That should have been Sydney.

That may have been Sydney.

That could/might have been Sydney.

High certainty



Low certainty

Again, the same modal forms used to express negative present inference are used to express negative past inference:

Wilbur: Someone was asking for you. I believe it was Sydney.

Gertrude: That might not have been Sydney.

That may not have been Sydney.

That won't/wouldn't have been Sydney.

That can't/couldn't have been Sydney.

Low possibility



Impossibility

Prediction

A more restricted set of modal forms are used for prediction (than for inference):

Question: What do you think the weather will be like tomorrow?

Response: It will/is going to rain tomorrow.

It should rain tomorrow.

It may rain tomorrow.

It could/might rain tomorrow.

Degree of probability

High



Low

The absence of *must* may be because *must* historically was a past tense verb and is thus not well suited for prediction or to the fact that predictions are less strong than inferences. The latter explanation works equally well for the absence of *have to* and *have got to* in predictions.

Again, paraphrases with adverbs or adjectives are available (note that the modal auxiliary in the *that* clause is *will* in all four cases):

It is certain that it will rain tomorrow.

It is probable/likely that it will rain tomorrow.

It is quite possible that it will rain tomorrow.

It is possible that it will rain tomorrow.

In the above *that* clauses, *will* seems to be a future tense as much as a logical modal. Also, the use of an adverb with a modal can reinforce or weaken the meaning of the modal; for example, *It probably/possibly will rain*.

Negative Prediction. On the negative predication scale, the forms occur in reverse order, but *could* drops out. Apparently, *couldn't* is more strongly associated with past time frames or present negative inference rather than negative prediction, which has a future time frame:

A: The weatherman said it will rain tomorrow. Do you agree?

B: (No), it might not rain tomorrow

it may not¹⁴ rain tomorrow

it shouldn't rain tomorrow

it won't/is not going to rain tomorrow

it can't rain tomorrow

because this new weather pattern is moving in.

Low possibility



Impossibility

Will/Be Going To. The choice between *will* and *be going to* to make predictions or simply to talk about the future depends on a number of factors. First of all, *be going to* is more informal and interpersonal than *will*, which is more formal and neutral as an expression of future time. Thus, one of two friends at a restaurant says to the other friend, "I'm gonna have the salmon." However, several minutes later, the same speaker says to the waiter, "I'll have the salmon." This analysis is supported in the data of Biber et al. (1999), which show *be going to* as much more frequent in conversation compared with academic prose.

Second, *be going to* is closely tied to action already begun in the present or immediately imminent, given evidence available in the present but over which the speaker has no control (or has lost control). Thus English speakers say things like:

"Help! Our boat is going to roll over."

"Look, it's gonna rain soon."

The equivalents with *will* would sound strange in such statements. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) explain this effect by contending that the present tense in *be going to* spotlights

the present situation, whereas *will* puts more focus on the future. The form *will* occurs in conditions and other statements where future outcome is contingent on some other result, is more distant, or involves speaker control:

"If you put your pawn there, he'll win the game."

"Go to the cafe at 9 P.M., and I'll meet you there."

In the immediately preceding example, *will* (*'ll*) conveys a sense of promise or commitment in the statement, but use of *be going to* would convey a plan or intention instead.

Finally, Szmrecsanyi (2003) identified the surrounding syntax as a relevant factor. He asserts that there is a tendency in spoken English to choose *be going to* over *will* for more syntactically complex contexts. *Be going to* was found to be a frequent choice in longer sentences, in subordinate clauses, and in negated contexts. He suggests that favoring *be going to* in such contexts is an aid to processing because it is morphologically and phonologically richer. For further discussion on choosing between *will* and *be going to* in discourse, see Chapter 9.

Conclusion

This concludes our overview of the modal auxiliaries in English. We freely admit that it is far from complete. For example, we have not fully discussed archaic or shifting modals such as *dare*. We have not discussed the hypothetical use of the modals *would*, *should*, *could*, and *might* since this is discussed later in Chapter 27, which deals with conditional sentences. We wish to emphasize again that very few languages have modal auxiliaries in the extreme form that English does—that is, as a separate verbal class that has very different syntactic properties from those of normal verbs.

We have also not discussed in any detail the dialect differences that modals display. For example, *must* is used much more frequently for social uses in British English than in North American English:

You must come over for dinner soon.

We must correct that problem as soon as possible.

In North American English, *have to* is generally used in such environments, while *must* is reserved for logical inference in the spoken language:

This must be the correct answer.

He must have heard the news.

Sometimes phrasal modals also exhibit dialect differences. For example, the Southern U.S. form *be fixing to* indicates a much more immediate future than *be going to*:

(speaker with pen and paper in hand): **I'm fixing to write a letter.**

Although we have a fairly good understanding of the form and meaning of modals and their phrasal forms, we are very far from understanding all there is to know about their uses. English speakers use modals in extremely subtle ways to try to advise or control others, to express affect (positive and negative), to mark attitude or stance, to show or downplay authority, and for other purposes. We now need further research on the interactional uses of modals in a variety of different social and institutional settings to make progress in this area.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** To accustom students to the fact that modal auxiliary verbs are followed directly by the lexical verb without *to*, an adaptation of a technique suggested by Ur (1988) can be used.

The teacher can describe an object, animal, or person with sentences using modals, and the students have to guess what it is. This allows them to hear the correct form repeatedly.

An example in Ur (1988), focusing on *can* and *can't*, is the following (where the subject to be guessed is “koala bear”) (p. 172):

It can climb trees.

It can carry its baby.

You can't buy one in a shop.

Sentences using other modal verbs could also be used. After this pattern has been established, the technique could be carried out in the way Ur suggests, in which only one student is not told what the chosen subject is and all the other students participate in giving clues, using modal verbs to do so.

Students could also write their own descriptions, following the same pattern, and the teacher or other students could guess the subjects.

2. **Form/Meaning.** The communication activity “Find someone who . . .” can be used for practice in the production of modal verbs in questions (Een & Badalamenti, 1993). Each sentence should use a modal verb. For example:

Find someone who can play tennis.

Find someone who might go to Europe one day.

Find someone who thinks they should do more exercise.

Each student has a worksheet with a list like the one above and moves around the classroom asking questions of their classmates and writing down the name of the person who fits the description in each sentence. To add more interest, this can also be done using a grid, with a sentence in each square. The game is then played like bingo—the first student to get a straight line of squares with a different name in each is the winner.

3. **Use.** Teach the modal verbs in systems so that the relationship between them is clear.
- a. One of the uses of the logical probability modals is to predict something such as the chance of rain tomorrow. Show your students what degree of prediction is expressed by each modal (or combination of modal and adverbs[s]):

| | | |
|---------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| (possibly) | weak, outside chance | It could/might rain tomorrow. |
| (perhaps) | stronger chance | It may rain tomorrow. |
| (probably) | even stronger chance | It may very well rain tomorrow. |
| (very likely) | very strong chance | It will very likely rain tomorrow. |
| (certainly) | certainty | It will rain tomorrow. |

For oral practice, have students express (using a modal) situations such as the following with the degree of prediction suggested by the context:

There's a 30 percent chance of rain tomorrow.

There's an 80 percent chance of rain later today.

The probability of good weather this coming weekend

The probability of man landing on Mars within the next 20 years

For written practice, have students read a paragraph or essay using modals predictively. Get them to describe in their own words the degree of each prediction. Have them write their own essay on a parallel topic.

- b. The other main use of the logical modals is to make inferences (guesses) about current or past states/situations. Give your students a modal paradigm for the present or the past. Example (for the present):

My phone is ringing.

weak inference: That could/might be Mary.

stronger inference: That may be Mary.

strong inference: That should/ought to be Mary.

very strong inference: That must/has to/has got to be Mary.

For oral practice, have students react (using a modal) to situations such as the following:

Student X is not in class today.

Student Y is falling asleep/is thinking of something else.

The local football star has not been playing as well as usual.

4. **Meaning.** Students can be asked to relate the core meanings of modals to various uses of modals. For example, provide instances of the same modal used for social interaction, ability, and logical probability:

You can play the guitar right now (if you'd like).

I hear that you can play the guitar.

You can't have played the guitar just now (because there's no instrument here).

Ask students to create their own paraphrases for these different uses of *can*. Can they relate the core meaning (*potential force*) to each of these sentences? To add a visual element to this activity, consider using Tyler's (2012) diagrams that represent core meanings for modals (pp. 110–114).

5. **Use.** Asking students to solve mysteries gives them the opportunity to use modals to make inferences about the past. Wisniewska, Riggenbach, and Samuda (2007) present a police report (p. 80) and Thewlis (2007) describes the scene of a crime (p. 256). In each case, students try to figure out what happened. As in Thewlis (2007), they can work in pairs to come up with multiple explanations and then determine the likelihood of each explanation. Alternatively, as in Wisniewska et al. (2007), students can be asked to turn the police report into a newspaper article in which they insert their own opinion on what happened.
6. **Use.** Newspaper advice columns, such as “Dear Abby,” provide an excellent source for social uses of modals. Wisniewska et al. (2007) recommend bringing a variety of such columns to class. The problem letters can be presented to students without the columnists' responses. Groups prepare responses to the letter writers and then compare their advice with that of the columnists. As a follow-up, students can write their own problem letters and practice giving advice to one another (p. 162).
7. **Use.** For the use of modals in offers, P. Hidalgo (personal communication) suggests a card game that uses a set of cards containing pairs of problematic situations and suitable solutions that could be offered; for example, a picture of a thirsty person would be matched with one of a glass of water.

Students play in groups of three or four, and each student receives a number of cards, the remainder to be left in a stack. One player calls out a problematic situation for which he or she holds the card (e.g., “I'm thirsty!”), and another player who has the card for a suitable solution is required to make a polite offer (e.g., “Would you like a glass of water?”). The pair of matching cards is then discarded. If the offer is not made politely, play passes to another player to call out a situation. If no student has the card for the solution, each of the players (except the one with the problem) picks up a card from the stack until someone gets the

solution card. If a player holds both the problem and the solution cards, they immediately discard them.

The winner is the first one to get rid of all their cards. While luck is involved, the students' correct production of polite offers also affects their chances of winning, and this motivates the students to monitor one another's performance. If the offer is not politely made, it is in their interest to point this out so that they have a better chance of winning.

8. **Use.** To teach the different usages of *will* and *be going to*, give your students situations such as the following, which were taken from a paper by Stafford (1975), and ask them to choose (1) or (2). Discuss their choices with them, and they should begin to become sensitive to the differences.

- a. You are on a tour of Disneyland with your friends. As you step off one of the rides, you suddenly lose your balance and shout,

(1) "Help! I will fall!"

(2) "Help! I'm going to (gonna) fall!"

Difference: *Be going to* is the preferred form, since it is used with actions or events beyond the control of the subject that are just about to happen.

- b. An army officer is talking to a superior officer. He says,

"Well, sir, if our strategies continue to be successful, the war

(1) is going to soon be over."

(2) will soon be over."

Difference: *Will* is the preferred form when a more formal register is called for.

- c. A shy 17-year-old boy calls up a girl he's been admiring all year. He says,

(1) "Will you meet me at the show this Friday?"

(2) "Are you going to meet me at the show this Friday?"

Difference: *Will* is used for requests/invitations; *be going to* is inappropriate in such contexts.

9. **Use.** To practice the use of modals in writing with more advanced students, collect excerpts from academic journal articles. Create worksheets that include both the excerpts with all modals removed and the original excerpts. Ask students to compare original texts with edited texts and to discuss the following questions:

- Do the original and edited texts create different impressions on the audience?
- If yes, how are these impressions different?
- For each modal, why do you think the author chose to use it? What effect was s/he hoping to have on the reader?

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide original example sentences that illustrate the following concepts. Underline the relevant word(s) in your examples.

a. phrasal modal

b. social use of a modal

c. logical probability meaning of a modal

- d. a combination of more than one modal or phrasal modal
- e. polite form of a request
- f. literal question with a phrasal modal
2. Explain the ambiguity of the following sentence:
His mother says he may go.
3. Explain the semantic difference between the two sentences in each of the following pairs:
- | | |
|--|--|
| a. It must be nighttime. | It must have been nighttime. |
| b. Will you help me with this problem? | Would you help me with this problem? |
| c. I was able to go to the library last night. | I could have gone to the library last night. |
| d. The ground is wet. It may have rained last night. | The ground is wet. It must have rained last night. |
| e. You should do your homework. | You had better do your homework. |
4. The meaning of the affirmative sentences in the following pairs is similar. Explain the semantic difference between the negative sentences:
- a. That might be important. → That might not be important.
- b. That could be important. → That couldn't be important.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

5. If your students produce the following, what would you tell them?
- | | |
|---|--|
| a. *You will can go there. | e. *I must to speak English. |
| b. *May you cash this check, please? | f. *This action will good for workers. |
| c. *We should study a lot for that class last term. | g. ?Excuse me, Mr. Smith, you gotta give us our homework back. |
| d. *They could be easily to reach the goal. | h. A: Would you please close the window? B: *Of course I would. |
6. What is the difference in meaning in each of the following pairs of sentences? There may be differences in the presuppositions of the speaker.
- | | |
|--|---|
| a. Could you tell me how to get to the bus stop? | Would you tell me how to get to the bus stop? |
| b. The principal said Joe may go. | The principal said Joe may have gone. |
| c. Sam should introduce the guest speaker. | Sam is supposed to introduce the guest speaker. |
7. Sometimes, when referring to ability in the past, one can use the phrasal modal but not the true modal:
- I was able to pick up the tickets last night.** ***I could pick up the tickets last night.**
- At other times, both the phrasal modal and the true modal are acceptable:*
- I could read at an early age.** **I was able to read at an early age.**
- Furthermore, even the ungrammatical sentence above is acceptable when it is negated:*
- I couldn't pick up the tickets last night.**
- Can you think of a generalization that would account for these restrictions on the use of could?*

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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Endnotes

1. Note that *must*, originally the past tense of Anglo-Saxon *motan*, has no historically related present form. What happened in Modern English is that *must* became largely “present” in terms of its meaning potential; as a result, explicit marking of past necessity is often expressed with the phrasal *had to*, past tense of *have to*. *Had to* was the first phrasal modal to develop in English, and it arose at a time when *must* and *should* had lost their connection to past time and no longer took direct objects.
2. We identify *be to* as a phrasal equivalent of *will*:
They will have a big wedding. = They are to have a big wedding.
However, it can also be used as a phrasal equivalent of *must* and *should*:
You must report here at 6 A.M. = You are to report here at 6 A.M.
What should I do? = What am I to do?
For an interesting examination of the various uses of *be to*, see Declerck (2010).
3. The form *ought to* is intermediate between a true modal (it doesn’t inflect) and a phrasal form (it takes *to*); one can classify it either way. Historically, *ought* is a past form of *owe*; in current usage, *ought* may lose its *to* in negative sentences and look more like a true modal, but this does not work for all speakers of North American English:
You oughtn’t (to) do that. We ought not (to) stay longer.
This reduction seems to be occurring with *had better/best* as well. We are seeing *better* without the *had* more frequently in print. This may be due to the fact that it is not very salient in its contracted form, *’d*.
4. There is some dialectal variation here in that native speakers represent questions and negatives with *used to* differently. Some write the prescriptively favored “Did you use to?” “You didn’t use to.” while others write “Did you used to?” “You didn’t used to.” For the second group, *used to* is on its way to becoming more of an intermediate frozen form like *ought to*, whereas the first group still views *used to* as a normally inflected past-tense form. The second group is probably indicating a future change.
5. For the phrasal modals, it should be noted that *used to* cannot be marked with present, *have got to* cannot be marked with past, and although *had better/best* takes a past inflection, it always expresses a future orientation.
6. Beyond assimilation, we often see elision with this phrasal modal: *I/You/We/They gotta think about it*. Note that elision is less dramatic with 3rd person singular forms (e.g., *She’s gotta be right*), where the contracted form *’s* is maintained.
7. There are Southern dialects of North American English where certain modal-plus-modal sequences are possible:
We might could do that.
See Nagle (1994) for further discussion.
8. In fact, Biber et al. (1999) found this pattern of modal + *have to* to be the most commonly occurring modal + phrasal modal pattern.
9. Three also seems to be the limit on multiple modal sequences in those Southern dialects that allow them: *might should ought to* (S. Nagle, personal communication).
10. Another possible, though less frequent, equivalent for *You don’t have to go* is *You needn’t go*. A form that is sometimes like a modal in questions and negatives and more often like a regular verb in affirmatives is *dare*: *Dare we ask? We don’t dare ask! He dared to be brave.*
11. *Would* appears in a number of other modal-like constructions, the functions of which are not exactly requests:
Desire—*would like (to)* (normally takes a statement form):
Sarah would like to travel around the world.
Ralph would like an apple.

Offer/invitation—*would you like (to)* (normally takes a question form):

Would you like something to drink?

Would you like to dance?

Preference—*would rather /sooner* (X than Y), *would prefer to*:

Brad would rather study languages than mathematics.

Joe would prefer to go to school instead of working.

One could argue that *would like (to)* and *would prefer (to)* are simply sequences describable as: modal + verb + infinitive. For pedagogical purposes, however, we advise teaching these as formulaic, modal-like lexical chunks to emphasize the unchanging nature of *would* in these expressions to avoid ESL/EFL errors such as:

***I will prefer to stay here.**

***Will you like some cake?**

12. It is also possible that the *could have* here is used to speculate as to why the tires lost air, e.g., in answer to the question, *Why are they flat?*
13. An anonymous reviewer of the second edition of this book indicated to us that for him/her *might* is the equivalent of *may* rather than *could*. We recognize that such differences are dialectally and idiolectally possible, especially with more rarely used modals such as *might*.
14. It is worth pointing out that *may not* has a different scope of negation when used for prediction than when used to deny permission:

It may not rain tomorrow. = It is possible that it does not rain tomorrow. (narrow scope)

You may not watch TV. = It is not possible (allowable) that you watch TV. (wide scope)

The Tense-Aspect-Modality System in Discourse

Introduction

There are patterns of tense, aspect, and modality (TAM) at the sentence-level that are useful for students to know. In addition to the ones that we have already discussed in Chapter 8, consider the following sentence:

I'm going to buy a bicycle, so I can do errands and exercise at the same time.

Here, the use of *be going to* in the first clause and *can* in the second create a plan+outcome pattern that students can learn and which they then can use to express their own plans and expected outcomes.

However, TAM analyses based on example sentences such as this one—even if well contextualized—are limited, in that such accounts fail to capture the TAM combinations that occur above the level of the sentence. In this chapter, we will focus on the patterns that TAM forms exhibit in English discourse, and we will attempt to explain why they occur.

To help us understand the uses of the English tense-aspect-modality system in discourse, the work of the linguist William Bull (1960) is an important and insightful starting point. The chapter also reports on a number of data-based studies that examine the functions of the TAM system in English discourse, both spoken and written. Such an examination of TAM is important because “tense-aspect-modality is one of the major devices coding the connectedness/coherence of sentences in their wider discourse context” (Givón, 1984, p. 269).

Learners of English are often challenged in their use of tense and aspect in discourse, and there are several possible reasons for this:

- Most teachers present tense as if it were related solely to time, which is not the case, as we shall demonstrate at a number of places in this chapter.
- Teaching tense and aspect only at the sentence level means that learners are never exposed to and never get to practice common discourse-level patterns.
- The learners' L1 can be a powerful influence. Not all languages mark tense and aspect, and even languages that do (e.g., German, Spanish, and Russian) have systems that differ from English in terms of what gets marked on verbs and when and why tense or aspect is used.

In preparation for our discussion of the English tense-aspect system at the discourse level, let's consider the two following constructed narratives:

- a. ?I have a splitting headache. I had it for two hours. I will take some aspirin.
- b. I have a splitting headache. I've had it for two hours. I'm going to take some aspirin.

In the first example, there is unmotivated tense-switching from present to past to future, which results in a choppiness. In the second example, however, we find the *present* tense in the first clause, the *present* perfect in the second clause, and *be going to* with a *present* tense *be* in the final clause; that is, all the tense-aspect forms have an orientation to the present throughout the sequence.

Similar observations can be made about the following texts concerning events reported in past time. Consider the following constructed examples:

- c. ?The little girl cries her heart out. She lost her teddy bear and is convinced she will never find him.

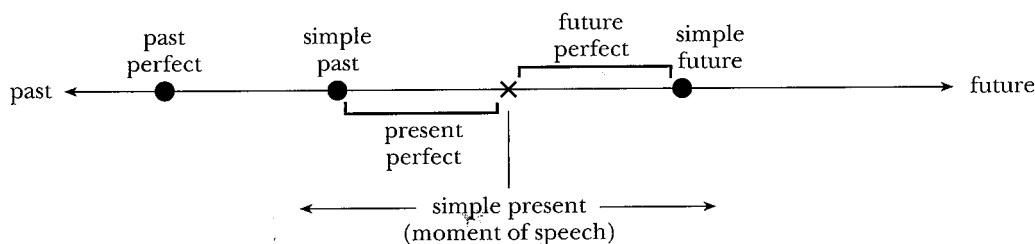
This narrative is comprehensible and not completely incoherent, but it comes out sounding somewhat disjointed and awkward when compared with the (d) version:

- d. The little girl cried her heart out. She had lost her teddy bear and was convinced she would never find him.

The second version of the past narrative has the first clause in the simple *past* and the second clause in the *past* perfect. The third clause has *was*, and the fourth has the historical *past* form of *will* (i.e., *would*), i.e., a past orientation is maintained throughout the narrative. One does not normally jump from present tense to past tense to future tense in a short piece of discourse. Yet this is precisely what many learners of English do when they speak and write in English. One reason for this may be that they have learned the English tense-aspect system one combination at a time, at the sentence level, without ever learning how the combinations interact in longer pieces of discourse. This chapter directly addresses this learning challenge.

The Bull Framework

Most accounts of English tense and aspect assume one timeline and try to illustrate all tense-aspect forms in terms of this single line:



The Bull Framework forces us to make a conceptual shift and to think in terms of viewing the tense-aspect system as a resource for taking different temporal perspectives on actions, events, and states of affairs. For example, if asked the question:

Would you like something to eat?

one can answer either (a) or (b) in American English:

- a. No, thanks. I've already eaten.
- b. No, thanks. I already ate.

The time of the speaker's meal does not necessarily differ in (a) and (b). Both responses report past events, but the choice allows the speaker to add his/her perspective on the current relevance of the response; this perspective is what conditions the choice rather than any real linear sense of time: (a) is not necessarily more recent within real time than (b). What (a) signals is the current relevance that the response is believed to have, whereas (b) does not signal any assumption of current relevance. In fact, (b) puts the speaker's last meal squarely in the past rather than the present. Another example that suggests that Bull is correct to take us away from a linear perspective on tense and aspect is to consider the future perfect, which asks the listener to step into the future and look back. It is quite possible, as the following example shows, for an event/action described with a future perfect (a) to have occurred before one described with the simple past (b):

a. John will have finished all that work months ago.

b. I saw John at the market yesterday.

Furthermore, the typical time line also does not explain why English speakers can use the simple present tense with a future time expression to indicate future time:

I travel to Mexico next Friday.

Nor does it explain why it is not always necessary to use the past perfect for a past event prior to another past event if time expressions are present to make the sequence clear (i.e., the past perfect is possible on *return* but not necessary):

We (had) returned from our vacation before Jack went on his trip.

Each axis in Bull's framework has a neutral or basic time slot in the middle and two possible marked slots—one on the left signaling a time before the basic time of the axis, and the other on the right signaling a time after the basic time of that axis. Based on this semantic framework, each "tense" of any language can be placed in the appropriate slot on the appropriate axis. It is quite likely, however, that any given language will not fill each possible slot with a unique form and that any given language might turn out to have some overlap of forms across slots.

See the table below for our interpretation of Bull's axes applied to English and their corresponding verb tense forms [with input from Houts Smith (1993)]:

| THE BULL FRAMEWORK | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <i>Axis of orientation</i> ↓ | <i>A time before the basic axis time</i> | <i>A basic axis time corresponding to the moment of reference</i> | <i>A time after the basic axis time</i> |
| <i>Present</i> | He has played golf since 1960. (present perfect) | He plays golf. (simple present) | He is going to play golf next Sunday. (future of the present) |
| <i>Past</i> | When he left to play golf, he had finished all his chores. (past perfect) | He played golf on Saturday afternoon. (simple past) | Having finished his golf game, he went out to dinner with his golf buddies. (no distinct form—use simple past) |
| <i>Future</i> | By 5:00, he will have finished all the chores. (future perfect) | He will eat dinner at 5:00. (simple future) | Upon completion of his dinner, he will watch TV. (no distinct form—use simple future) |

This framework helps us understand quite explicitly why some of the preceding narratives were smoother or more coherent than their alternatives: In the preferred discourse examples, the author stayed within one axis of orientation—that is, present or past—and made “before” and “after” time references that were appropriate to that axis; the author did not jump from one axis to the other.

Here are some other discourse samples adapted from Larsen-Freeman, Kuehn, and Haccius (2002) using the verb *sing*, which were created to teach students about the Bull Framework (p. 5):

Present Axis:

Joe sings in the church choir. He has sung in the choir for years. He is going to sing in it as long as he can carry a tune.

Past Axis:

Joe even sang in the church choir when he was a teenager. In fact, he had sung in his school choir before that. He sang every chance he got.

Future Axis:

Joe will sing in the holiday concert next week. He will have sung in that event 20 times. He will likely sing in it for 20 more.

Again, each sample begins with a statement anchored in the basic axis of orientation time. It then moves to talk about a time before the basic axis time, using perfect aspect. It finishes using the tense corresponding to a time after the basic axis time. For instance, in the future axis example, the tense sequence moves from *future* to *future perfect*, and the text once again ends with *future*. English has no unique “after future” form. Also, some may ask why *be going to* is part of the present axis and *will* is part of the future axis because these forms occasionally seem interchangeable. The ability of *be going to* to inflect for present tense and the greater ease of combining *will* with perfect aspect suggests that the assignment of *will* to the future axis and of *be going to* to the present axis is indeed valid despite their areas of semantic overlap (see Chapter 8 for discussion of their similarities and differences).

Another unique feature of Bull’s framework is that the so-called perfect aspect in English is shown to be much more closely associated with tense than is the progressive aspect. The perfect aspect signals the “before time” in each axis, (called “prior” time in Chapter 7), whereas the progressive aspect is a truly independent aspectual form that can express notions such as duration, noncompletion, or iteration in combination with all the tense-aspect-modality forms. By including the *be going to* form, we now have 14 distinct tense-aspect combinations in English instead of the traditional 12 “tenses” presented in Chapter 7. We use the verb *talk* to illustrate this:

Bull System Forms

V -pres (talk(s))
have V + -en (have/has talked)
be -pres going to V (is/am/are going to talk)
V -past (talked)
had V + -en (had talked)
will V (will talk)
will have V + -en (will have talked)

Bull Forms plus Progressive Aspect

be -pres V -ing (is/are/am talking)
have been V -ing (has/has been talking)
be -pres going to be V -ing (is/am/are going to be talking)¹
be -past V -ing (was/were talking)
had been V -ing (had been talking)
will be V -ing (will be talking)
will have been V -ing (will have been talking)

You might wonder whether the Bull Framework differs substantively from previous analyses of the English tense-aspect system, and if so, how. We feel that the Bull Framework permits an analysis that is like traditional accounts such as Jespersen’s (1964), in that meaning has priority over form and that it retains much of the traditional grammatical terminology for describing the tenses. Bull’s system, however, is considerably more complex, in that not just one but the three

parallel time lines (i.e., the three axes of orientation) are used to illustrate and explicate the tense system. Bull's system begins to account for tense sequences in discourse, as well as accounting for tense in isolated sentences, and teachers can refer to the axes to show students how tenses should relate to each other in discourse; that is, students should perhaps learn and review the tenses one axis at a time rather than one form at a time. Bull's framework is also more sophisticated and subtle than the usual structural account of the English tense-aspect system, in that it shows clearly how the so-called perfect aspect consistently functions as a marker of "a time before"² with respect to the basic English tense in each of the three axes, with the result that the progressive appears to be a more flexible and genuine marker of aspect than the perfect in English because it interacts with each distinct form in Bull's matrix; it is not restricted to "a time before" or "a time after."

MOTIVATIONS FOR CHANGING ONE'S AXIS OF ORIENTATION

A Shift of Time (Explicit). When we teach learners about the Bull Framework, we initially encourage them to stay within the same axis of orientation. Yet there are certainly reasons for changing one's axis, and we can notice them as soon as we examine authentic discourse. The most obvious reason for changing one's axis of orientation is the presence of a temporal expression that overtly signals the need for such a shift. For example, the following caption, which appears below a newspaper photo showing workers making repairs to a damaged highway overpass reads:

Caltrans [California Transportation Authority] workers shore up a tunnel under the 5 Freeway north of downtown L.A. A fiery tanker truck crash in the tunnel Saturday forced the closure of most lanes of the 5, causing chaos for commuters. (*Los Angeles Times*, Tuesday, July 16, 2013, Section AA, p. 1)

In this short text, present tense (present axis) occurs in the first sentence to describe the photo. The second sentence contains *Saturday*, which refers back to a specific past date (July 13, 2013) and the event that took place on that date, thus requiring the use of the past tense (past axis) on the main verb (*forced*) in the second sentence of the caption.

A Shift of Time (Implicit). There are sometimes less overt reasons for shifting one's axis of orientation, such as the rhetorical structure of a text. Consider the following text for an advertisement:

For the second year in a row, the Chrysler Town & Country has been honored with J.D. Power and Associates' prestigious APEAL award. In their recent study, Town & Country tied as "America's Most Appealing Minivan" after its owners rated it on over 100 attributes. So while we always insist that it be quiet, we certainly don't mind hearing this sort of noise. (Chrysler, 1998)

There are three sentences in this text. The first is a statement of current relevance that begins in the past and continues to the present; thus the present perfect (present axis) is used. In the second sentence, the results of a prior survey are reported in the past tense (past axis). There is no explicit mention of a prior time, and, in fact, the use of *recent* might lead learners to expect the present perfect to be used. Then in the final sentence, the text returns to the present axis and uses the present tense to offer a subtly boastful evaluation.

Thus, a motivated shift of axis in discourse may be explicitly marked by a temporal expression as it was in the caption, or it may be due to the meaning and rhetorical organization of the propositions in the text as it was in the advertisement. The latter case is definitely more difficult to teach and learn than the former because there is no explicit marking to indicate the shift.

Backgrounding in Narratives. Chafe (1972) was among the first to introduce the notion of a "generic" tense (i.e., a tense used to make a comment or an aside). We described this concept

as “backgrounding” in Chapter 2. Typically, the form used for backgrounding is the present tense, often interrupting a past tense (past axis) narrative, as in the following excerpt from a longer transcribed oral narrative:

“Skiing over a Cliff”³

- 1. So my front skis bent down;**
- 2. Interestingly enough, when something like this happens**
- 3. all these thoughts flash in your mind;**
- 4. I managed to flash my whole life in front of me.**

Lines 1 and 4 are in the past tense (past axis) and represent the main storyline, while lines 2 and 3 are an evaluation in an inserted aside in the present tense that provides background material.

Immediacy in Narratives. Linguists have long been aware that speakers and writers sometimes make their narratives of past events more immediate and vivid if they recount them in the present tense. This convention is referred to as the “historical present,” and it represents the suspension of past axis to achieve a dramatic effect. This is different from backgrounding since it applies to the main storyline. It is illustrated in the following excerpt from a longer oral narrative:

“Driving Home”⁴

- 1. So Dad decides that he’s gonna pass these cars**
- 2. And, uh he pulls out in the other lane**
- 3. And starts passing them**
- 4. And all of a sudden we see this big truck,**
- 5. You know, this truck coming for us.**

This narrative is based on past events, yet the speaker tells much of his story in the present tense (i.e., the historical present).⁵

A Turn of Events in a Narrative. In a study of the narratives of younger English speakers in the United Kingdom, Levey (2006) reports finding the present perfect being used in a past narrative. He invites us to consider the following story, recounted by a twenty-year-old British student who is frustrated when trying to print out a document:

“Printing a Document”

- 1. and it was quite a big document**
- 2. it was like thirty pages long**
- 3. and all of a sudden it’s gone through**
- 4. and the printer’s just started printing**
- 5. it’s got to page thirty**
- 6. and it’s kept going**
- 7. and I couldn’t stop the printer . . .** [Levey, 2006, p. 137 with an example from Cheshire’s (2005) corpus]

In this extract, clauses 3–6 all relate a sequence of past events while containing a verb in the present perfect. What is noteworthy is that it has been said that the historical present most often follows the phrase *all of a sudden*; however, here, it is the present perfect, which follows this phrase and which is used to signal a turn of events in this past narrative.

Direct Quotes. Sometimes a narrative or a news report will contain direct quotes. In such cases, using a direct quote often causes a change of temporal perspective or axis. Consider the following excerpt from a newspaper article that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*:

“Firefighters Make Stand at Idyllwild”

- 1. Working in searing conditions and aided by water-dropping aircraft,**
- 2. crews cleared paths and laid down red-colored fire retardant**
- 3. on the outskirts of Idyllwild and several nearby communities--**

4. an effort to contain the flames and keep them from residential areas.
5. "That's our primary goal," said Bob Poole,
6. a fire information officer with the U.S. Forest Service,
7. who noted the blaze came as close as 2.5 miles to Idyllwild.
8. "But fire sometimes is unpredictable." (*Los Angeles Times*, Friday, July 19, 2013, Section AA, p. 1)

In this excerpt, the tensed verb forms in the first two lines of the first paragraph are in the past tense because the article was a report of events that had happened the day before (i.e., on July 18). Line 4 is an untensed infinitive phrase connected to the three preceding lines. Line 5 begins a new paragraph with a direct quote from the information officer of the U.S. Forest Service. The quoted material in lines 5 and 8 is in the present tense, while other verbs used to frame the officer's quote and say more about the fire are once again in the past tense. The quoted material in the present tense is set off visually through the use of quotation marks.

The Frame-Elaboration Hypothesis

A somewhat different perspective on the use of tense-aspect-modality sequences in discourse is taken up in Kyung-Hee Suh's research. Drawing on a number of existing databases, Suh (1992a) hypothesized that in the course of constructing oral narratives, English speakers often use one tense-aspect-modality form to frame or introduce a type of narrative or an episode, and then they switch for the remainder of the episode to another form to elaborate the episode and provide the details.

FRAME-ELABORATION PATTERNS WITH TENSES

Introducing a Present Habitual Narrative. In this regard, one pattern that Suh noticed was that the present perfect tense can be used to introduce a present-tense habitual narrative. Observe how this pattern is illustrated in the following example:

"Jazz Musician"

1. There's been a lot of untruths told about improvisation.
2. Men just don't get up on the stage and improvise on things they're not familiar with.
3. True improvisation comes out of hard work.
4. When you're practicing at home, you work on a theme, and you work out all the possibilities of that theme.
5. Since it's in your head, it comes out when you play.
6. You don't get out on the stage and just improvise,
7. Not knowing what the hell you're doing.⁶
8. It doesn't work out that way. (Terkel, 1974, pp. 598–599)

In this narrative, the present perfect initiates the episode in line 1, and the simple present—modified by two present progressives in lines 4 and 7 that seem to be background information—completes the episode. The entire episode is in the present axis and describes what repeatedly happens with jazz musicians as they work at their art form.

Providing a Transition to a Past Narrative. Suh (1992a) noticed even more cases in oral narrative where the present perfect provides a transition—here, from the moment of speaking (i.e., Bull's present axis) to introduce a specific past experience, the details of which are then reported in the simple past (past axis). The following narrative exemplifies this frame-elaboration pattern:

“Gas-meter Reader”

- 1. I’ve been bit once already by a German shepherd.**
- 2. And that was something.**
- 3. It was really scary.**
- 4. It was an outside meter the woman had.**
- 5. I read the gas meter and was walking back out and heard a woman yell.**
- 6. I turned around, and this German shepherd was coming at me.**
- 7. The first thing I thought of was that he might go for my throat, like the movies.**
- 8. So I sort of crouched down and gave him my arm;**
- 9. Instead of my neck, he grabbed a hold of my arm, bit that, turned around.**
- 10. My arm was kinda soft so I thought I’d give him something harder.**
- 11. So I gave him my hand, a little more bone in that.**
- 12. So he bit my hand.**
- 13. I gave it to him so that he wouldn’t bite my throat.**
- 14. I didn’t want him to grab hold of my face.** (Terkel, 1974, pp. 365–366)

In this excerpt, the present perfect introduces or frames the specific past event and the simple past is then used to elaborate and give the details. There is also limited use of the past progressive in lines 5 and 6, perhaps to better focus on the target actions of the man’s walking away and the dog’s coming at him. The entire excerpt, other than the opening present perfect frame, is reported in the past axis.

FRAME-ELABORATION PATTERN WITH PHRASAL MODAL AND MODAL SEQUENCES

In addition to tense and aspect sequences like the two illustrated above, Suh’s (1992a) frame-elaboration hypothesis also works for two other interesting cases that involve phrasal modals and modals: the use of *used to* and *would* for past habitual narratives and *be going to* and *will* for future scenarios.

Used To and Would in Past Habitual Narratives. Previously, researchers have had problems distinguishing *used to* and *would* at the sentence level, for it seemed that pairs such as the following were more or less equivalent in terms of stating habitual actions or states in the past:

- a. My father used to exercise every morning.**
- b. My father would exercise every morning.**

Certainly, one difference is that (a) can signal only habitual past action, whereas (b) can also be conditional given appropriate context (i.e., “if he had time”). However, without further context, (a) and (b) cannot be distinguished at the sentence level. In collecting many instances of spontaneous oral narratives with past habitual time references, Suh (1992b) noticed that the semantically more salient phrasal modal *used to* tends to mark an episode boundary or set up a frame for a past habitual event, whereas the more contingent form *would* (or *’d*) marks the details or elaborates the topic, with the simple past also occurring as an alternative to *would*.

Consider the following example:

“Farm Worker”

- 1. The bad thing was they used to laugh at us, the**
- 2. Anglo kids. They would laugh because we’d bring tortillas**
- 3. and frijoles to lunch. They would have their nice little**
- 4. compact lunch boxes with cold milk in their thermos and**
- 5. they’d laugh at us because all we had was dried tortillas.**
- 6. Not only would they laugh at us, but the kids would pick fights.** (Terkel, 1974, p. 32)

Here, the form *used to* clearly initiates and frames the episode while *would* and contracted *'d* accompany the elaborating statements. Thus, we have a difference at the discourse level that was not possible to detect with an analysis that considered only the sentence level.

Used To...But for Contrasts. In contrast to the relatively longer texts in the habitual past that Suh (1992b) described, many shorter texts exist in which patterns with *used to* are also discernible. In the following examples, *used to* occurs in the first clause and is followed by *but* and a second and possibly third clause in the present, present progressive, present perfect, or present perfect progressive. These noninitial clauses typically follow *but* and contrast with and negate the past habitual state expressed in the first clause with *used to*.⁷

a. Alice used to be a kindergarten teacher, but she doesn't work outside the home anymore. She's now a mother and homemaker.

b. Jack used to live in Chicago, but since 2002, he's been working in Des Moines.

We feel that such shorter frames should also be identified, described, and then presented and practiced with learners who are not yet ready to deal with the longer episodes that are typical of the narratives we have cited above.

Be Going To and Will in Future Scenarios. Suh (1992a) also found many examples of future narratives that lend further support to her frame-elaboration hypothesis. She found that oral narratives that express future scenarios tend to be framed by *be going to*, which makes a bridge from the present moment of speaking to the future. These narratives are then elaborated with *will ('ll)*, which expresses future contingencies. Consider the following example:

"Gastric Restriction"⁸

[A doctor informally explains the surgical procedure he performs on the morbidly obese.]

- 1. They're going to go in and, uh, have their gut**
- 2. slit open, their stomach exposed, and have it stapled off**
- 3. so that there'll be two pou—/an upper pouch in the**
- 4. stomach which will hold about two ounces of food,**
- 5. it's got a little hole right in—in the middle of that**
- 6. pouch where—where food when it's finally ground up**
- 7. will slowly go through.**

In this passage, the initial *be going to* holds for the first two lines, after which the speaker switches to *will ('ll)* except for the background aside given in the simple present in lines 5 and 6. Just as with *used to* and *would*, Suh (1992a) found that some of the important differences between *be going to* and *will* can be explained in terms of their distribution in discourse episodes expressing future scenarios rather than trying to explain everything at the sentence level.

Be Going To...So + Can/Will in Future Plan with Purpose. As we saw at the outset of this chapter, *be going to* also seems to participate in a shorter frame that contrasts with the longer future scenarios described by Suh (1992a). In these cases, *be going to* expresses a future planned action; the subsequent clause often begins with *so* and is elaborated with *can* or *will* to express the justification, purpose, or expected outcome of the planned action:

a. Patrick O'Brien is going to marry his American girlfriend so he can get a green card.

b. I'm going to study in Spain for a year next year so I'll be fluent in Spanish.

Once again, we feel that such shorter frames, when they can be described and documented, are also very useful for pedagogical purposes. Their brevity makes them accessible even to beginners, who can understand them and create meaningful short discourse segments by referring to such frames early in their language-learning experience.

SUMMARY OF PATTERNS FOR ORAL NARRATIVES

Perhaps it would be useful at this stage to summarize the various frames that have been described thus far for oral narratives:

| | |
|---|--|
| introducing a present habitual narrative | frame: present perfect elaboration: simple present |
| providing a transition to a past narrative | frame: present perfect elaboration: simple past |
| past habitual narratives | frame: <i>used to</i> elaboration: <i>would</i> ['d] (sometimes simple past) |
| short contrasts (past state vs. present) | frame: <i>used to</i> conjunction: <i>but</i> elaboration: simple present (with progressive and/or perfect aspect acceptable, too) |
| future scenarios | frame: <i>be going to</i> elaboration: <i>will</i> ['ll] |
| future plan + expected outcome/purpose | frame: <i>be going to</i> conjunction: <i>so</i> elaboration: <i>can</i> or <i>will</i> |

These discourse frames are not the only way these types of oral narrative can be accomplished, of course; however, they are sufficiently frequent and salient in English speakers' spontaneous discourse to merit pedagogical attention; they give learners a valuable tangible heuristic for creating coherent discourse.

A More Complex Example: The Present Perfect Progressive

All of the preceding examples have had an initial marked form providing a frame and then a simpler, shorter form used for elaboration. Other types of textual organization are also possible. Consider the case of the present perfect progressive (PPP) in English, which needs to be explained using a more complex rhetorical structure that requires background, giving prior information, as well as some follow-up discourse. A sentence using the PPP without any context is not fully interpretable and leaves the listener or reader dangling:

Lucy has been hiking.

Does this sentence mean that Lucy has been hiking just prior to the moment of speech? Or does it mean that Lucy has been hiking off and on lately? Or does it mean something else? To better understand when and why the PPP is used, Celce-Murcia and Yoshida (2003) examined 250 tokens of PPP in spoken and written discourse and found that most episodes with PPP consisted of three moves or steps:

First move: present context plus background information (present or present perfect tense)

Second move: activity of special focus/concern (PPP)

Third move: evaluation or follow-up (present tense)

In other words, the PPP typically occurs as a pivot in the middle of an episode rather than at the beginning or the end. The following is a transcription of a segment from a radio talk show, with the names changed to respect the privacy of participants:

“Lucy’s Call”

Host: I’m Dr. Mary Smith and you’re on talk radio, Hello?

Caller: Good afternoon, Dr. Smith. I’m Lucy and I’m 59. I’d just like to share a positive thing that I have found in the last year or so. I’ve been hiking and find that this is a wonderful way to keep your weight down and meet some people and just feel really good. (Celce-Murcia & Yoshida, 2003, p. 6)

In this segment, after the opening greetings, Lucy gives Dr. Smith some background concerning her age and her wish to share a positive experience. This is the first move, and she uses the present tense and present perfect tense. Then Lucy uses the PPP “I’ve been hiking,” and this is the second move. Everything after the PPP sentence is the third move (i.e., the follow-up and evaluation of the activity mentioned in the second move).

This three-move rhetorical structure is so salient that if interlocutors are very familiar with each other, the first and even the third move can be unspoken and implied. For example, if the shared knowledge is that a good friend has been working hard to stop smoking, and if one then encounters this friend, sniffs the air, and says, “You’ve been smoking again,” then the first verbal move was unnecessary and the third move (i.e., the negative evaluation) is implied without the speaker making any additional comment. The moves are still there contextually; however, they can be explained through shared knowledge rather than explicit discourse. For the most part, the data that Celce-Murcia and Yoshida (2003) collected and examined had the three-move structure explicitly expressed. Also, while many of the PPP tokens collected were spoken discourse, there were quite a few also found in written discourse of a more informal nature.

Given the complexity of the three-move structure and of the PPP verb form itself, learners should be at the intermediate or high-intermediate level to comprehend and produce such discourse episodes. They would need to have good control of the present tense, the present progressive, and the present perfect tense before taking on this more complex tense-aspect construction.

Tense-Aspect-Modality and Interaction in Conversational Oral Discourse

The patterns discussed were for more or less monologic oral narrative. When two or more speakers are engaged in conversation, however, the dynamics are often different such that we can note other ways in which tense-aspect-modality forms are used.

Knowledge/Confirmation Checks. For example, Suh (1992a) noticed that when an interrogative structure with present perfect tense is inserted in the middle of a storytelling sequence, the speaker is often checking the interlocutor’s knowledge before proceeding further.⁹

“Juarez and El Paso”

Ken: We went down into Juarez and through El Paso, and oh, we had a ball.

Louise: Really?

Ken: Yeah. Have you ever been t— have you ever hearda Juarez?

Louise: I’ve hearda both of ’em because my girlfriend’s old boyfriend was stationed in El Paso.

Ken: Well we went to Juarez... (Suh, 1992a, p. 94)

In this example, Ken uses the present perfect in his second turn to interrupt his past-tense narrative in order to check Louise's knowledge of the places he is talking about. Louise also uses the present perfect in her response in order to display her knowledge. Here the shift from simple past to present perfect is interactionally motivated rather than being driven by the structure of the narrative that Ken is relating.

Marking Personal Involvement. McCarthy and Carter (1995) have pointed out that some instances of variation between *be going to* and *will* are interactionally driven, in that *be going to* expresses greater personal involvement on the part of the speaker, whereas *will* is a more neutral, detached, and formal option. One of their examples follows:

"BBC radio weather forecast"

Temperatures will be below freezing, and it's going to be icy on those country roads, so do take care if you're driving. (McCarthy & Carter, 1995, p. 24)

Here, McCarthy and Carter (1995) feel that their interactional explanation describes the form shifts occurring in such informal weather forecasts given on radio and TV, where *will* is used for neutral prediction and *be going to* signals the forecaster's more interpersonal message to listeners. We noted in Chapter 3 that argument structure is more fluid in conversation than in written discourse. Similarly, McCarthy and Carter (1995) conclude that "real spoken data pushes us away from considerations of the semantics of time and more towards interactive interpretations of verb-form choices" (p. 114).

Marking Involvement and Interaction. In a study of related interest, Schwarz (1988) had consultants place 24 oral and written texts along a continuum ranging from "involved, interactive" to "detached, no interaction" and found that the frequency of the progressive aspect was much higher in texts that were rated as having high interaction and involvement than in texts that did not. Here are the numbers for four texts representing the two extremes on the continuum (the first two were ranked highest; the last two lowest):

| Text | Frequency of progressive |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| conversation between good friends | 30/1,000 words |
| personal letters to friends | 20/1,000 words |
| phonetics textbook | 1.3/1,000 words |
| economics textbook | 1/1,000 words |

There was a near perfect correlation between where the texts fell on the continuum and the frequency of the progressive aspect, which means that English speakers make systematic use of the progressive to signal involvement and interaction, or to signal detachment, formality, and lack of interaction, by not using the progressive.

Marking the Potential for Change. Batstone (1995) proposes that a simple tense—by virtue of signaling a neutral, unchanging situation—can bring about different results in conversation from the same tense with progressive aspect, which signals potential for change:

a. Sheila says she doesn't want to come.

b. Sheila is saying she doesn't want to come.

In Batstone's (1995) data, the (b) version occurred in the conversation, and the two interlocutors quickly shifted to a discussion of how to get Sheila to change her mind. Had the (a) version occurred, Batstone feels the speaker would have signaled that Sheila's position was not open to change, and a different conversation would have ensued.

A similar observation has been made by Bhimiji (2001) about radio talk show discourse. She noticed that when the host of the radio show shifted topics, he first conveyed prior talk as fixed and complete, using the past tense. However, when he presented an ongoing viewpoint or he granted his caller an opportunity to elaborate on what was just said, he used the present progressive:

“Radio Talk Show Discourse”

Host: as I understand

what you *are sayin’*

when you *are talkin’* about stereotypes... (Bhimiji, 2001, p. 564)

Bhimiji notes that “the progressive tense allows the host to give the speakers an opportunity to further define or confirm their viewpoints before he initiates any opposition” (p. 566).

We agree with the researchers concerning the importance of examining oral language in interaction for special uses of tense-aspect-modality forms. However, by referring to our earlier discussion of the Bull Framework, we point out that it is not accidental that present-axis forms (simple present, present perfect, present progressive, and *be going to* future) are frequently used to accomplish interactive functions. Interaction relates to the “here and now,” in contrast to the simple past, which signals past events, or the form *will*, which makes future predictions.

Tense Patterning in Written Discourse

Marking a Climax. Sentence-level accounts of tense and aspect tell us that the past perfect generally marks an event occurring prior to some other time or event in the past (e.g., *Before John came, I had finished my dinner.*)¹⁰ However, in written discourse, we have found that the past perfect can be used to mark a climax—that is, to state a purpose for relating a prior series of actions and events narrated in the simple past. Consider the following example:

“The Convocation”

The students sat in the bleachers of Pauley Pavilion watching the faculty enter in their caps and gowns. Dignitaries continued to arrive while the band played a festive melody for the onlookers. To the cheers of the crowd, President Clinton came in and took his assigned seat on the podium . . . UCLA’s 75th anniversary *had begun.*

(Adapted from the *UCLA Daily Bruin*, May 25, 1994)

This pattern is similar to those of Suh (1992a) and the authors identified above; however, here the past tense is used to give the storyline from the outset and the past perfect is used to terminate the written narrative episode rather than to initiate a narrative episode because it is functioning here to mark the outcome or resolution. It is certainly not being used to mark a prior action or event. In fact, an interesting permutation of this narrative pattern also occurs in the historical present. In other words:

Text in simple past with climax in past perfect → Text in simple present with climax in present perfect (i.e., historical present)

The following text is an example of this historical present pattern:

“Life in an Icy Inferno”

...we’re wearing harnesses and hard hats and descending on ropes and ladders into an ice cave known as Warren Cave, which has been hollowed out by steam from the volcano. We unclip the harnesses about 40 feet below the surface of the mountain. The floor is moist, soft soil and rocks; the walls are ice. We are here to retrieve a temperature probe—one of 23 the group left on the mountain a year ago in the hopes of determining how much the soil temperatures change and thus whether these environments are relatively stable. As we move away from the entrance, the light fades, and we have to use flashlights... Moore disappears down a corridor and after a few moments gives a shout. He’s *found* the probe. (i.e., he *has found*) (Judson, 2012, p. 115)

This text is in the historical present, and the climax is marked with the present perfect. Note that in both this example and the previous one, the verb phrase marking the climax is a punctual verb phrase (i.e., a verb phrase that expresses something that occurs in an instant, like *to begin*, *to find the probe*). This also seems to be a necessary element of such rhetorical structures.

Illustrating a Point and Generalizing. Another systematic use of tense shift in written discourse has been noted by Brinton (1994), who prepared grammar exercises to accompany an introductory college-level psychology text by Huffman, Vernoy, and Vernoy (1994). Brinton found many adjacent paragraphs or episodes, such as the following:

“Psychology Textbook”

In 1848, Phineas Gage suffered a bizarre accident when an explosion happened at his work place. As a result of the explosion, an iron rod entered his skull and pierced his frontal lobe. Phineas recovered physically from this accident, but his personality changed forever.

From the case study of Phineas Gage, it appears that the frontal lobe controls much of our individual personality and defines our ability to make decisions. We now know that the frontal lobe helps us to plan and change actions. (Brinton, 1994, p. 9)

Brinton (1994) noticed that the authors of this psychology text frequently presented a real-life illustration of a phenomenon in a paragraph written in the past tense as in the first paragraph above. The story or anecdote then becomes the basis for the authors’ discussion in the second paragraph of the significance of the anecdote and similar events. This more general discussion invariably occurs in the present tense.

Although the above order is the preferred and most frequent one for presenting anecdotes and generalizations in this particular textbook, sometimes the reverse order occurs—the generalization paragraph or episode comes before the anecdote. Whichever order occurs, however, the real-life illustration is in the simple past tense, which includes historically past-tense modal forms (e.g., *would* and *could*), and the authors’ generalizations and discussion are in the simple present tense. This discourse-level use of these tenses is in fact similar to their sentence-level uses since simple past tense is often used to relate a past event or fact and the simple present is used to express generalizations. If this pattern occurs widely enough in other social science textbooks, it is one that can be taught explicitly to ESL/EFL readers and writers who are using such a textbook in their content classes.

Reporting Research. Burrough-Boenisch (2003) observes that when reporting research, it is customary for the present tense to be used to signal general truth and for the researcher’s own findings to be reported in the past tense. She adds that a popular book on scientific English writing (Day, 1995) lists the following conventions:

1. Established knowledge (previous results) should be given in the present tense.
2. Description of methods and results in the current paper should be in the past tense.
3. Presentation (Table 1 shows that . . .) is given in the present tense.
4. Attribution (Jones reported that . . .) is given in the past tense. (p. 72)

However, as Burrough-Boenisch acknowledges, Swales and Feak’s (1994) research reveals that researchers do not always adhere so strictly to such conventions. In fact, they state that tense choice in reviewing previous research is subtle and somewhat flexible. As a general guideline, Swales & Feak (1994) offer

... a move from past to present perfect and then to present indicates that the research reported is increasingly close to the writer in some way: close to the writer’s own opinion, close to the writer’s own research, or close to the current state of knowledge. (p. 184)

In her own research, Burrough-Boenisch (2003) found that what motivated evaluators of Dutch biologists’ writing to change the tense of a particular verb was often a desire to achieve tense consistency within a sentence or paragraph (what we have called attention to with our discussion of

the Bull Framework). On the basis of her research, she adds that “tense use conventions in English scientific and academic writing are not adhered to slavishly by NSs [native speakers]” (p. 19).

Conclusion

This chapter has presented generalizations and data demonstrating how important the English tense-aspect-modality system is for achieving coherence in discourse and how important it is to present tense and aspect as a system, rather than presenting each tense as a discrete construction.

In this text, we introduced some of the tense-aspect patterns found in written discourse. We pointed out that these frames are not the only means in English for expressing these rhetorical relationships. They are not like sentence-level grammatical rules; they are rhetorical tendencies. However, they are frequent and salient enough for us to suggest that teaching them to learners of English is a useful strategy. Learners who use these frames appropriately for their production of discourse will be producing coherent text that will be readily understandable to users of English.

We feel that this chapter offers teachers and learners more options than other resources and that it also begins to explain where one form is preferred over another, especially in cases where one or more forms can often be used at the sentence level to “mean” essentially the same thing:

pres perfect/simple past
be going to/will
used to/would

The findings reported in this chapter have pedagogical implications because the patterns of use reported here have the potential to serve as templates or discourse “scripts” regarding certain discourse functions of these forms. Such information can readily be applied in materials development. Teachers (and learners) will encounter authentic materials that contain segments that frequently conform to a large extent to the patterns we have described. Suh (1992a; 1992b) found them occurring frequently in comic strips and novels, as well as transcribed conversational data. There are of course other patterns as well; L. Gray (personal communication) has reminded us that teachers of English for specific purposes need to know how tenses are used in different disciplines.

Teachers also need to help learners understand how the English tense-aspect-modality system works in relation to different discourse types and to realize that it operates differently in different languages; that is, the discourse conventions of learners’ native language tense-aspect-modality system will most likely not transfer positively to English. In fact, in examining tense choice in essays and cloze passages completed by native and nonnative speakers of English,¹¹ Hinkel (1997) found that the past-tense selections of these two groups differed significantly due to different styles of rhetorical development and temporal organization, as well as culturally different ways of framing events. She concludes that the way that past time frames are conventionalized in English is not always obvious to nonnative speakers because boundaries of objective time and tense are conventionalized differently within discourse frames in different cultures and in the languages associated with these cultures.

Finally, further research is needed to help complete and refine the preliminary sketch that we have given here of the uses of tense-aspect-modality in English discourse. The studies that we have presented constitute neither a complete nor a unified account; however, they do provide a useful beginning that we hope others will be able to extend and refine.

Tense, aspect, and modality are not the only areas where the discourse level is crucial to understanding how grammar functions, and we will adopt a discourse-level perspective

in other chapters. As Michael McCarthy (1991) has so aptly stated, “A discourse-oriented approach to grammar would suggest not only a greater emphasis on contexts larger than the sentence, but also a reassessment of priorities in terms of what is taught...” (p. 62).

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988) suggest that students or the teacher bring in postcards of scenic places in their country (or pictures of any places they would like to visit) to elicit discussion of travel plans. The teacher should have some extra postcards and pictures available. Each student presents a card or picture (or several) and gives a short narrative about travel plans or suggestions using *be going to* to frame and *will/’ll* for elaboration; the student should also give a reason and can use a *because* clause with present tense to signal the reason. The teacher should model a sample narrative for the class, using appropriate postcards or pictures (p.80):

I’m going to visit the Tuscany region of Italy on my vacation. I’ll go to Florence, Pisa, and Arezzo because these are interesting old towns with beautiful art and historical architecture.

2. **Form.** Making explicit use of the Bull framework, K. Bailey (personal communication) devised a lesson for simultaneous review of the past perfect and the future perfect for high-intermediate students. In this lesson, Bailey used many examples to show the semantic relationships and adverbial markers that the two tenses share in the past axis and future axis respectively. For example:

Monday (future axis): John will arrive at 9 P.M. tomorrow. (By that time/Before then)
I will have finished reading the book you lent me.

[Tuesday: John arrives at 9 P.M.]

Wednesday (past axis): John arrived at 9 P.M. yesterday. (By that time/Before then) I had finished reading the book you lent me.

Students would then use the teacher’s model to create their own examples, based on their own experience.

3. **Form.** Have each student make a list of 10 things they did when they were 10 years old. Next, ask them if they still do each of these things now. For every item on the list that states something they no longer do, students should generate short texts with *used to* marking the past habitual action or state and with the simple present tense and/or the present perfect expressing the present contrast. For example:

I used to roller-skate when I was 10 years old, but I no longer do.

I used to speak Spanish when I was 10 years old, but now I can’t. I’ve forgotten my Spanish.

4. **Use.** Ask students to write a brief story about an experience they had in the past. They should be told to stay in the past axis when they write. For example:

In 1968, I spent the summer with my uncle, who lived on a farm. I learned to milk cows, bring in the hay, and feed the chickens. It was a very good experience.

After getting feedback and correction from the instructor or from peers, the students should then rewrite their story in either the present or the future axis, changing time markers as appropriate.

5. **Use.** Students can be given several texts (at least three) that exhibit the same pattern, for example, the *used to . . . would (’d)* framework-elaboration pattern often used in past habitual narrative. They should work in pairs or small groups in order to figure

out the function of *used to* and *would/d* in the narratives. The reports of the various groups, with appropriate input from the teacher, should result in an informal version of Suh's (1992b) Framework-Elaboration Hypothesis. Here are example texts you might use in addition to texts cited earlier in this chapter:

- a. My older brother used to do most of the fighting for us, and he'd come home with black eyes all the time. (Terkel, 1974, p. 32)
 - b. We used to joke about him in the office. We'd call him Mr. Straight because he was Mr. Straight—a man who'd never invite me to have a drink after work. He would never invite me to lunch alone. Would never, never make an overture to me. (Terkel, 1974, p. 107)
 - c. We used to have these things when I was a kid up in Northern California. The flowers—after the flower would wilt—this little pea-like structure would come, and it would form kind of a coil, and the seed would grow inside it. . . . (Suh, 1992b, p. 8)
6. **Use.** For a good review activity to practice applying the Bull Framework, we draw on and extend a suggestion from Haccius (2002), who recommends asking one of his students to give a sequence of his/her daily activities with some time references. For example, Haccius elicited and wrote on the board:

San gets up at 5 A.M.

San takes a shower and gets dressed.

San eats breakfast.

San brushes his teeth.

San goes to the station to catch his train at 6:15 A.M.

All of these activities can be related by the class in the simple present tense to create a narrative reflecting a habitual present perspective on San's activities. However, Haccius then asks his students to begin with the final activity on the list in order to practice the present perfect:

When San goes to the station to catch his train at 6:15 A.M.,

he has already brushed his teeth.

Different students can begin with the underlined activity and state something else that San has already done.

The same practice activity can be extended to the past axis by using “yesterday” as the frame of reference. The students can relate what San did yesterday in a simple past narrative. Then they can again take the final activity (San went to the station to catch his train at 6:15 A.M.) and use it as a foil for practicing the past perfect: *When San went to the station yesterday to catch his train at 6:15 A.M., he had already brushed his teeth*, etc. Likewise, by changing the frame of reference to “tomorrow”, the students can relate the activities using a future orientation (tomorrow) and then begin with the final activity in order to practice the future perfect: *San will go to the station to catch his train at 6:15 A.M. tomorrow. At that time, he will already have brushed his teeth.*

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide original example sentences that illustrate the following concepts. Underline the relevant word(s) in your examples. You may need to write a short series of sentences for some of the terms.
 - a. historical present
 - b. backgrounding tense
 - c. past time axis
 - d. future time plus progressive aspect
 - e. interactive use of the present perfect
 - f. frame-elaboration pattern for
 - (i.) present habitual narrative
 - (ii.) past habitual narrative
 - (iii.) future scenario
2. Explain the difference in meaning between the italicized parts of the following two sentences:
 - a. *I see him* every day at school.
 - b. The other day, I'm walking home from school and *I see him* coming up the road.
3. Explain the reason for the tense changes in the following excerpt from a short story:

There's a man in the habit of hitting me on the head with an umbrella. It is five years to the day since he began hitting me on the head with his umbrella. At first I couldn't stand it; now I've grown accustomed to it. I don't know his name. I know he's an ordinary man, with a plain suit, graying at the temples, and a nondescript face. I met him one sultry morning five years ago. I was sitting peacefully on a bench in a Palermo park, reading the newspaper in the shade of a tree. All of a sudden I felt something touch my head. It was this same man who now, as I write, automatically and impassively keeps striking me blows with his umbrella.

That first time I turned around full of indignation (I become terribly annoyed when I'm bothered while reading the paper); he went right on, calmly hitting me.

(Sorrentino, 1989, p. 233)
4. What difference in effect is there in the following excerpt from a short story when the simple past tense (a) is changed to the historical present (b)?
 - a. I was a little girl, nine years old, in 1961. You'd left my father and me only two years before. Four months after leaving, you sent me—always me, never him—your first postcard, of a turnpike in the Midwest, postmarked Enid, Oklahoma. You called me “My little angel” and said that the sunflowers by the side of the road were tall and very pretty. (Kaplan, 1989, p. 85)
 - b. I am a little girl, nine years old, in 1961. You've left my father and me only two years before. Four months after leaving, you send me—always me, never him—your first postcard, of a turnpike in the Midwest, postmarked Enid, Oklahoma. You call me “My little angel” and say that the sunflowers by the side of the road are tall and very pretty.
5. In the following excerpt from a newspaper article, the past perfect occurs twice (underlined here). Describe the rhetorical function of these two tokens of past perfect.

Mark Williams was out with his butterfly net in his favorite South African mountain range when a flutter of gray-blue wings sailed by. They were almost as small and nondescript as the other gray-blue butterflies drifting past.

Almost.

Heart pounding and net flailing, he dashed after the bobbling sliver of color, hope fluttering like a wind-blown flag. He hooked in the tiny creature, its wingspan just over 1.5 inches. It was a Lotana blue, believed to be extinct. Nobody had seen one alive in decades.

"I ran it down and caught it with a huge...swipe, because they can move," Williams said of that moment five years ago. "I knew straight away I'd rediscovered the Lotana blue." (Dixon, 2013)

6. Refer to the Bull Framework to explain the use of tense and aspect in the following newspaper article (Brattleboro Reformer):

In 1982, the city that now stands as a monument to effective downtown rebirth could have been a war zone.

Some 18,000 manufacturing jobs had left in the previous 10 years. Homeless people wandered the streets, living in abandoned warehouses. In 1969, the federal government determined that Chattanooga had the dirtiest air in America, even worse than Los Angeles.

"The air was so bad that you had to drive to work with your headlights on every day," recalled resident Roy Anglin, who was a manager of one of the factories that stayed. "We're situated in a basin so the pollution was trapped."

"Downtown was basically a ghost town," said Rich Bailey, director of the local chamber of commerce's news bureau. "That was a result of economic change all across the country. Historically, Chattanooga was a manufacturing town, and many of the manufacturers left the city. We had entire blocks with almost empty buildings and parking lots. It was scary."

All that has changed now. The air is much cleaner, the warehouses have either been torn down or renovated to accommodate the new businesses, and the Tennessee River waterfront that had once been used for slag heaps and empty coke furnaces is today lush, green and vibrant. (Seitz, 1999, p. 1)

Test your ability to apply what you know.

7. Students of yours have written the following problematic tense sequences in their essays. In each case, explain the nature of the problem,
- ?Now that John had won the nomination, he is going to campaign for the election.
 - ?Zero Dark Thirty was a film that had affected the way that I thought about terrorism.
 - ?After I learned this, I suddenly realize that my working thesis was too large in scope.
 - ?I have come from China in 1991 and I am here for six years. I have some problems. My biggest problem was English. The teacher used to ask me questions, but I used to hate it.
8. A student is unsure about the tense changes she has made in the following section of an essay she is writing. She asks you to correct her tenses. How will you respond?

Since the mid-20th century, a great number of immigrant women came to the United States and looked for jobs to support their families. The garment industry has become a place where these women are oppressed because garment workers do not need to speak English and do not even have to be U.S. citizens.

9. Explain any differences between the following sentences to a student who is confused whether one is more accurate:
- I'm going to study in Spain for a year next year, so I'll be fluent in Spanish.
 - I'm going to study in Spain for a year next year, so I'm going to be fluent in Spanish.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For pedagogical suggestions on teaching tense-aspect-modality (and other features of discourse grammar) to language learners, see:

- Celce-Murcia, M., & Olshtain, E. (2000). *Discourse and context in language teaching*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2003). *Teaching language: From grammar to grammaring*. Boston, MA: Thomson Heinle.
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For creative pedagogical suggestions for applying the Bull Framework to exercises and activities for ESL learners, see:

- Frodesen, J., & Eyring, J. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 4* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
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Endnotes

1. Some readers have questioned the validity of this combination; however, we have seen and heard many examples of it, such as "I'm gonna be visiting my cousin next week."
2. Recall that the perfect aspect signals a "before time" not just with the basic tenses, but also with modals, infinitives, and other nonfinite forms.
3. This is only a short excerpt from a longer narrative. It is from data collected by Keenan and Bennett (1977) for a research project.
4. From the database used to produce the research reported in Keenan and Bennett (1977).
5. In such oral narratives, there are sometimes many motivated switches from present tense to past tense and vice versa. The research on this tense switching by Labov (1972), Schiffrin (1981), Wolfson (1982), and others is very interesting, but it takes us beyond the scope of this chapter.
6. The first *-ing* form in this line (*knowing*) is a participle, not a progressive (see Chapter 25). The second (*doing*) is a progressive form.
7. Note that *used to* in this short frame cannot take *would* as a substitute since it refers to a past state. (**Alice would be a kindergarten teacher, but she doesn't work anymore.*) Only past habitual actions can be expressed with *would* as well as *used to*.
8. This is from data that Nina Weinstein (1984) recorded and transcribed for her master's thesis, which focused on pronunciation, not grammar. We used her transcripts to search for grammatical patterns since it was authentic spoken data.
9. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) call these "confirmation checks." They are common in discourse between native and nonnative speakers, where they are cited as an example of interactional modification employed by native speakers.
10. There are, of course, cases where the past perfect marks some later noncompleted event (G. Stevens, personal communication); e.g., *The instructor collected the papers before I had finished the exam.* In such cases, we say that the past perfect is signaling a counterfactual clause in that "before I had finished = I did not finish."
11. The nonnative speakers in Hinkel's study had only first languages that do not mark verbs for tense, such as Chinese, Thai, and Yoruba.

Introduction

The acquisition of English negation by first and second language learners has been widely studied (see, for example, Cancino, Rosansky, & Schumann, 1978). Researchers have reported similar orders of acquisition. Even though the researchers do not always agree on all the details, the sequences reported seemed remarkably congruent. Learners first use *no*, sometimes preceding an entire sentence. Later, they add *not* to their repertoires. They also use *don't* correctly in formulas (*I don't know*), but overgeneralize it elsewhere (e.g., *She don't go*). Then they add the auxiliary verb *can't* and the negative copula *isn't*. Following these, they begin to use *don't* accurately (as opposed to only correctly in the formula *I don't know*), and then finally they use other forms of *do* (i.e., *doesn't* and *didn't* and other auxiliary verbs and negative adverbs). We bring up these findings to call attention to one interesting and relevant phenomenon, which revolves around the nature of language and its learning. The first stage of English negation acknowledged by most researchers has been referred to as the *No + V* or external *no* stage, where English learners produce utterances such as:

No it go.

The question that immediately springs to mind is where such utterances might have come from. English does have a negative particle *no*, but it is not used in such a way. In a discussion of the issue for one child's acquisition of English negation, Lieven and Tomasello (2008) observe that *no* was the child's mother's most frequent negator. Of course, she did not use it in the same way as the child, instead using it to negate nouns (e.g., *no books*), and gerunds (e.g., *no shouting, no running, no hitting*). Apparently, the child heard enough of such phrases to prompt him to create a novel construction. This is an example of creative structure building, in complex interaction with the frequency of forms in the language environment and of the child's own current capacity. This explanation works well for older learners of English as a second language, too, who use the *no*-structure, e.g., "I no remember" (Eskildsen, 2012), even when their native language has no such form. Thus, the lesson to be derived from this brief excursion into the L2 acquisition literature is that there is a combination of factors at work—frequency or saliency of the form in the language of the environment (which draw the learner's attention), the social interaction between the learner and others, and the creativity of the learner himself or herself.

An initial learning challenge for instructed ESL/EFL students is the syntax of English negation. Different languages tend to place their negative particle in different positions in the sentence:

Spanish (preverbal): **Juan no habla inglés.** 'John doesn't speak English.'
 (John) NOT (speaks) (English)

German (postverbal): **Johann geht nicht zur Schule.** 'John doesn't go to school.'
 (John) (goes) NOT (to) (school)

English (postauxiliary): **John** { **will** } NOT talk to Judy.
 { **does** }

Also, many languages allow multiple negation in one sentence (negative concord). Here are some examples from Penka (2012):

Spanish: **Ella no ha dicho nada.** 'She hasn't said anything.'
 She NOT has said N-thing

Polish: **Nikt mnie nie odwiedza.** 'Nobody comes to visit me.'
 N-person me NOT visit

While multiple negation was historically acceptable in English, depending on the scope of the negation, negative concord has only survived in Modern English in nonstandard sentences such as "I didn't say *nothing*" (Kallel, 2007).

In addition, some languages do not have distinct forms for expressing their equivalents of the English words *not* and *no*. Some have more than two negative particles.¹ Finally, English usually contracts *not* in speech and in informal writing, which few other languages do with their negative particle. This makes it less salient, and therefore harder, for learners to perceive and acquire than if it were consistently produced as a separate, uncontracted word.

As we will see, negation in English is a very broad topic, affecting words, phrases, and sentences. Many of our comments here are restricted to the simple sentence level; that is, to the means of constructing negative rather than affirmative (also known as positive) simple English sentences:

| <i>Affirmative</i> | | <i>Negative</i> |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Cynthia likes to fish. | → | Cynthia does not/doesn't like to fish. |
| Danielle is an editor. | → | Danielle is not/isn't an editor. |
| Robby can cook well. | → | Robby cannot/can't cook well. |

although we discuss word and phrasal negation as well. We also, of course, deal with the meaning and use of negation in English. In this chapter, we mention only in passing negative questions, negative commands, and negative compound/complex sentences. Those negative structures are examined in detail in other parts of this book.

The Negation System: Its Forms

THE WORD LEVEL

At the word level, one can simply use a negative affix in English to convey negativity. The way to make many adjectives and adverbs negative is to add a negative derivational prefix to a word:

Adjective

| | | |
|--------------------|---|----------------------|
| happy | → | unhappy |
| appropriate | → | inappropriate |
| possible | → | impossible |
| logical | → | illogical |
| relevant | → | irrelevant |
| ordered | → | disordered |
| typical | → | atypical |
| leading | → | misleading |

Adverb

| | | |
|----------------------|---|------------------------|
| happily | → | unhappily |
| appropriately | → | inappropriately |
| possibly | → | impossibly |
| logically | → | illogically |
| relevantly | → | irrelevantly |
| orderly | → | disorderly |
| typically | → | atypically |
| leadingly | → | misleadingly |

The variety of prefixes derives in part from the fact that different ones were borrowed from different languages. For example, *un-* is a native English prefix (and the most productive one in English today); *in-* and its allomorphs (different forms of the same morpheme) *im-*/*il-*/*ir-*, come from Latin; *dis-* comes from Greek; *a-* from Greek through Latin; and *-mis* from earlier forms of English and French.

Other parts of speech can also take some of these prefixes to make them negative; for example, with verbs, *dis-* combines to make *dislike* and *distrust*; *mis-* combines to make *misunderstood* and *misinterpret*; and *de-* (not on our list for adjectives and adverbs) is also used with verbs—for example, *declassify* and *decode*.

The negative prefix *non-* is used to form certain negative nouns and adjectives:

Nouns

| |
|--|
| non- + sense = nonsense |
| non- + intervention = nonintervention |

Adjectives (non- + verb)

| |
|---|
| non- + drip = non-drip (as in non-drip paint) |
| non- + stick = non-stick (as in non-stick surface)² |

Some of these prefixes can have more than one meaning. *Un-*, for instance, does not always indicate negativity. Consider verbs such as *unfasten* and *unwrap*, in which the *un-* means a reversal of the process denoted by the stem. The use of the *un-* to signal this other meaning, however, is not as frequent as the use of the *un-* prefix to mean “not” with all the gradable adjectives (those denoting a property that can be possessed to varying degrees), as in *unreasonable*, *unwise*, and *unkind*. Nevertheless, *un-* is still subject to various restrictions; in particular, it is not used where some etymologically unrelated opposite is available (we say *bad*, not **ungood*), where some other, less productive prefix is established (*disloyal* is more common than **unloyal*), or with adjectives that express the same notion to a stronger degree (*unhappy*, but not **unecstatic*).

Determining which prefix to use with which stem is not always predictable. Further, the rules about which negative prefix to use when more than one is possible are not absolute, but we can make the following generalization: *in-* (and its allomorphs), *dis-*, and (less so) *un-* tend to be pejoratively evaluative of the stems to which they attach, while *non-* and *a-* prefixes are more descriptive or objective (Horn, 1989). Some minimal pairs that illustrate this contrast are as follows:

Pejoratively evaluative

| |
|-----------------------|
| irrational |
| disbeliever |
| disfunctional |
| unprofessional |
| unprofitable |
| untheoretical |
| immoral |

Descriptive/Objective

| |
|------------------------|
| nonrational |
| nonbeliever |
| nonfunctional |
| nonprofessional |
| nonprofit |
| atheoretical |
| amoral |

The choice of *in-*, *im-*, *il-*, or *ir-* is phonologically conditioned by the consonant that follows it. *In-* is most common, but *im-* is used if the following consonant is a bilabial (/b/, /p/, /m/), *il-* with a stem beginning with *l*, and *ir-* when the adjective or adverb begins with *r*.³

There is also a negative suffix, *-less*, which can be used to negate nouns by expressing their absence or nonexistence, thus forming adjectives such as *hopeless*, *penniless*, *speechless*, *lifeless*, and *shameless*. Howell (personal communication) has pointed out that there is a similar suffix, *-free*, with a more positive connotation (cf. *careless* versus *carefree*): *smoke-free workplace*, *fat-free food*.

Certain indefinite pronouns and adverbs beginning with *no-/not-* can also be used to convey a negative meaning:

Indefinite pronouns and an adverb
no + thing = nothing
no + body = nobody
no + one = no one (two words)⁴
no + where = nowhere
not + ever = never

Examples

Nothing has been done.
Nobody is home.
No one seems concerned.
They were nowhere to be seen.
They are never at home.

However, not all words can be made negative with the use of affixes. Lexical gaps exist; some words have no single-word negative counterparts. For instance, we say *not unique*, not **ununique*. It works the opposite way as well. Some words exist in negative forms that have no affirmative counterparts, or ones that are seldom used, as the following humorous excerpt from Jack Winter's essay in the *New Yorker* entitled "How I Met My Wife" makes clear:

It had been a rough day, so when I walked into the party I was very chalang, despite my efforts to appear gruntled and consolate.

I was furling my wieldy umbrella for the coat check when I saw her standing alone in a corner. She was a descript person, a woman in a state of total array. Her hair was kempt, her clothing shevelled, and she moved in a gainly way. (*New Yorker*, July 25, 1984, volume 75, p. 82)

Other formally negative items are the negative coordinating conjunction *nor* (*and + not*), and the negative correlative conjunctions *neither . . . nor* (*not + either*). Functional items that are not formally marked for negation but that connote negativity are the quantifiers *little* and *few*, as opposed to the positive quantifiers *a little* and *a few*—the latter being made negative with the use of the adverbs *only* and *just*, the negative adverb subordinator of conditionals *unless*, the negative adverb of time *yet*, the negative intensifier *too* (e.g., *too late*), and adverbs of frequency *seldom*, *rarely*, *scarcely*, and *hardly*. There are also words that Jespersen (1917) calls "inherent negatives." These are content words that have a negative meaning but that appear positive in form (e.g., *fail*, *forget*, *lack*, *exclude*, and *absent*).

THE PHRASE LEVEL

At the phrase level, *no* can function as a negative determiner in an NP:

I am surprised that no alternative was proposed.
No plans have been made.

Many idioms take this form; for example, *no way*, *no problem*, *no wonder*, *no sweat*, *no worries*. Another common idiomatic pattern that we saw being used by the mother of the L1 English learner is *no + gerund*, which may be used to indicate that something is prohibited—*no shouting*, *no biting*; also common for prohibition are *no smoking*, *no parking*, *no trespassing*—or unexpected, such as *no kidding*, *no fooling*.

Before infinitives (i.e., a sequence of *to + verb* that follows an inflected verb), *not* is used to make the phrase negative:

Marge has decided not to pay her income tax this year.

Although prescriptively prohibited (see Perales-Escudero, 2011, for discussion), we have noticed that many native speakers of English will split the infinitive with the negative particle, presumably to emphasize the negative action in the phrase:

Marge has decided to *not* pay her income tax this year.

THE SENTENCE LEVEL

Not is also the main sentence-level negator:

| | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | <i>Not</i> | <i>Not Contracted</i> (more common) |
| Statements: | Mario is not at home. | Mario isn't at home. |
| Questions: | Are you not going? | Aren't you going? |
| Commands: | Do not move! | Don't move! |
| Exclamations: | Is that not grand! | Isn't that grand! |

However, *no* can also make a sentence negative, especially when it negates the subject:

No one was home to sign for the package.

No and *not* are also negative substitutes. *No* can be a negative substitute for an entire sentence:

A: Are you going to town after class?

B: No. I have got to meet Ahmad in the library.

and *not* can substitute for a negative subordinate clause (parallel to *so* substituting for an affirmative subordinate clause):

Are you coming? { **If not, please let me know.**
If so, please bring something to drink.

Are you coming? { **I think not.**
I think so.

SUMMARY

The following table summarizes the basic formal markers of negation in English:

| A SUMMARY OF BASIC NEGATIVE FORMS IN ENGLISH | | |
|--|--------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Affix-Negation</i> | <i>No-Negation</i> | <i>Not-Negation</i> |
| a- | no | not, -n't |
| dis- | nothing | never (not + ever) |
| in-/im-/il-/ir- | nobody | neither (not + either) |
| mis- | no one | nor (and + not) |
| de- | nowhere | |
| non- | | |
| un- | | |
| -less | | |
| -free | | |

A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE-LEVEL NEGATION

Here, we deal with negation in statements, returning to negation of other sentence types in later chapters.

With Auxiliary Verbs

Consider the following sentences:

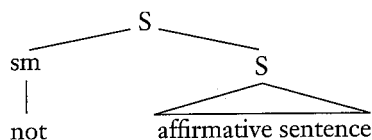
1. (a) I can swim.
(b) I cannot swim.
2. (a) It is going to rain on Monday.
(b) It is not going to rain on Monday.
3. (a) We have done our homework.
(b) We haven't done our homework.
4. (a) Philip is taking a nap.
(b) Philip isn't taking a nap.

It is clear that what distinguishes the form of the (b) sentences from the form of the (a) sentences is the presence of the negative particle *not* or its contracted and suffixed form *-n't*. As we noted previously, English has postauxiliary negation, and these sentences illustrate that generalization. Auxiliary verbs, such as modals, phrasal modals, the perfect *have*, and the progressive *be*, are all followed by the *not* particle. Moreover, if more than one auxiliary verb is present, as in the next example (*have* and *be*), it is the *first* auxiliary verb that is followed by the negative particle:

5. (a) Pam *has been* working hard.
(b) Pam *hasn't been* working hard.

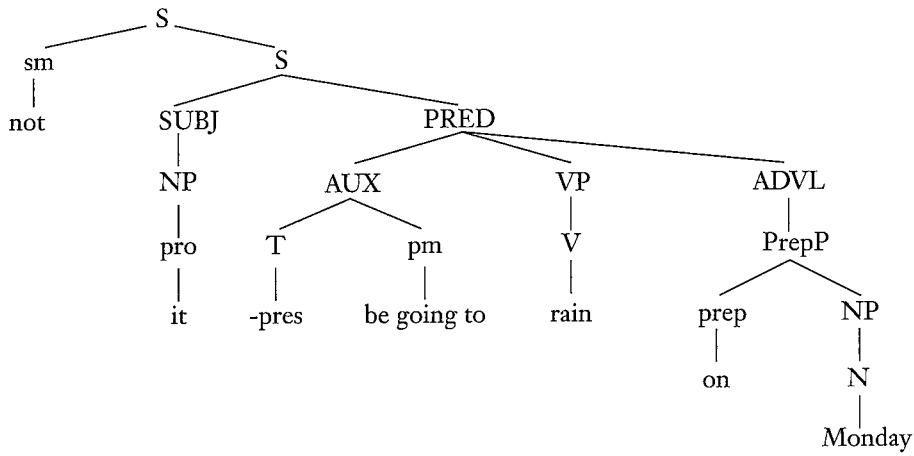
Following Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985), we call the first or only auxiliary verb the *operator* in that this verb performs several operational functions in English that involve relating major syntactic structures.⁵

Since in all of our sentence-level examples thus far, the negation applies to the entire sentence, not just the auxiliary verb, we depict *not* as a sentence modifier.

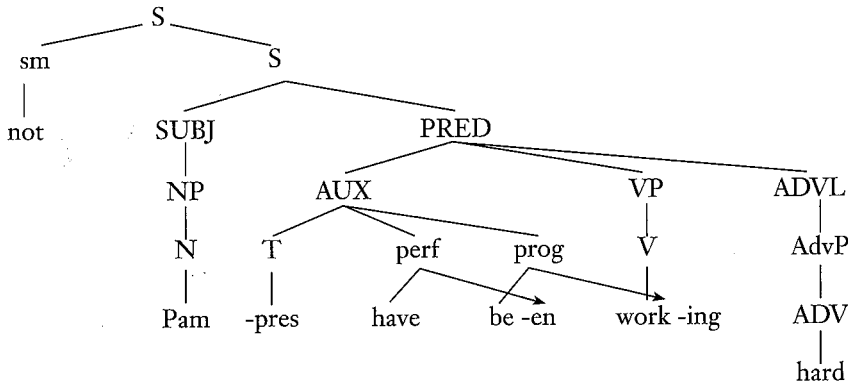


To be more precise, the basic structure for sentences 2(b) and 5(b) are as follows:

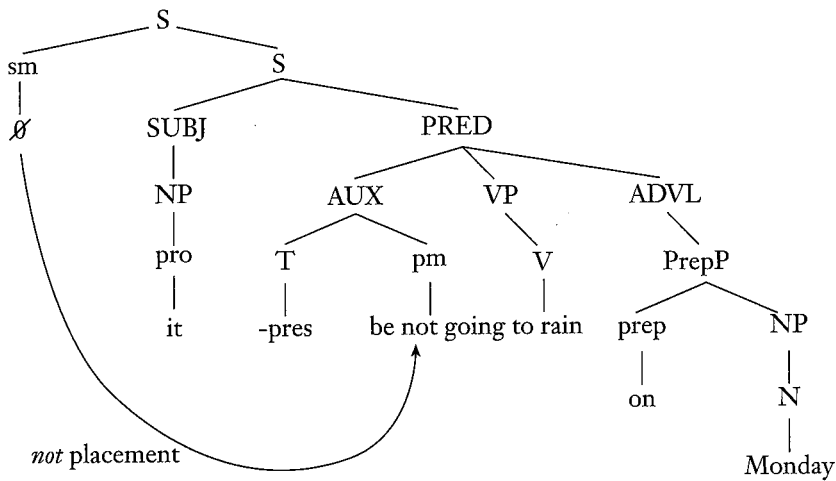
2. (b) It is not going to rain on Monday.



5. (b) Pam hasn't been working hard.



Then a way to show your students sentence-level negation is to put the *not*-particle in its proper position in English—after the operator.



Not Contraction

You might also point out that in many English sentences, the *not* reduces to *-n't* and attaches to the appropriate verb, as can be seen in sentences 3(b), 4(b), and 5(b). Many combinations of *-n't* with an auxiliary verb are regular, but some are irregular:⁶

Regular—disyllabic negatives

did + n't → didn't

would + n't → wouldn't

have + n't → haven't

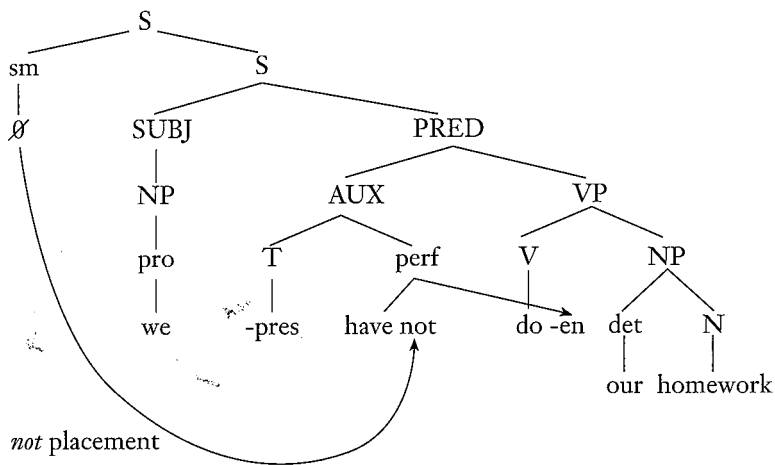
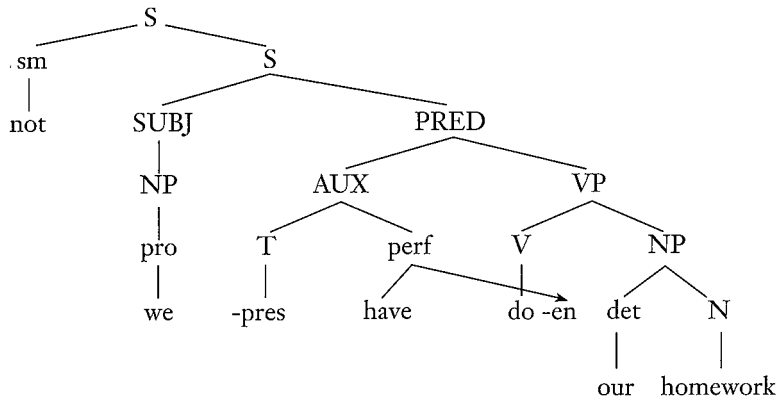
Irregular (orthographically and/or phonologically)—monosyllabic negatives

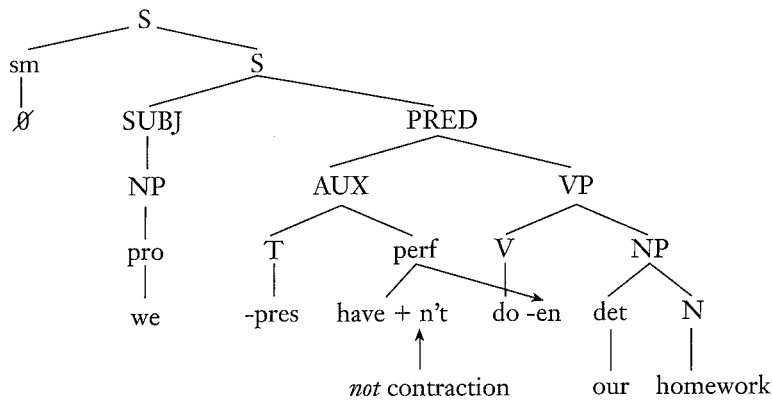
will + n't → won't ("ll" is lost, vowel changes)

can + n't → can't (one "n" lost)

do + n't → don't (vowel sound changes)

With the *not* contraction, we can now also produce sentences such as 3(b), 4(b), and 5(b). For example, here are the trees for sentence 3(b):





With the Be Copula

So far we have accounted for the placement of the negative particle when a sentence contains an auxiliary verb. But not all sentences have such a verb, of course. Two other types of verbs are possible: the *be* copula and all main verbs other than *be*.

You may have wondered why in our phrase structure rules we made a distinction between the *be* copula and other main verbs. Actually, the *be* copula is distinctive for a number of reasons. One of the main ones is that the *be* copula patterns very much like the auxiliary verbs in that it, too, can be an operator. For instance, to make a sentence with the *be* copula negative, we place the *not* after the *be*, just as we did with the first or only auxiliary verb. (This is not true with other main verbs, as you will see later in this chapter.) In 6(b), the *not* is placed after the *be* copula operator; and in 7(b), the *not* is placed after the *be* copula operator and is optionally contracted to it:

- 6. (a) **Brad is a teacher.**
- (b) **Brad is not a teacher.**
- 7. (a) **The beach is crowded.**
- (b) **The beach isn't crowded.**

The only exception to this worth noting is the gap and the stigma that exist in Modern Standard English against contracting the negative particle with the first person singular form of the *be* verb, *am* (see Hudson, 2000; Anderwald, 2004, for discussion).

- 8. (a) **I am tired.**
- (b) **I am not tired.**
- (c) ***I amn't tired.**
- (d) **I ain't tired.** (nonstandard)

Of course, a contracted form of 8(b) is possible in Standard English if the *be* verb contracts with the subject instead of the negative particle:

- (d) **I'm not tired.**

However, the difference between the aux/*be* contraction with subjects and the *not* contraction with verbs is not merely a stylistic option, an issue that we take up later in this chapter.

With Other Main Verbs

Another aspect of English that has changed over the years is the fact that it is no longer grammatical, as it was in the Elizabethan period, to place the negative particle after a main verb other than *be*.⁷

***I go not.**

Instead, the *do* auxiliary of Modern English, already extant in the 15th century, had become obligatory for forming negatives by the 18th century (Han & Kroch, 2000):

I do not go.

Thus, in Modern English, when there is no other operator in a negative sentence, we insert the auxiliary verb *do* to perform the function of operator, to carry the tense and permit the negative to attach to it in contracted form. This is called *do*-support:

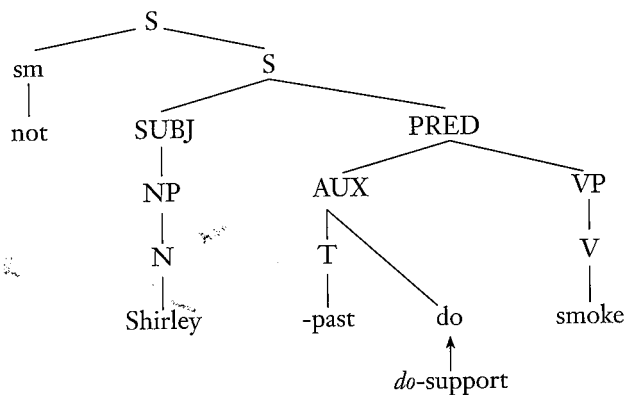
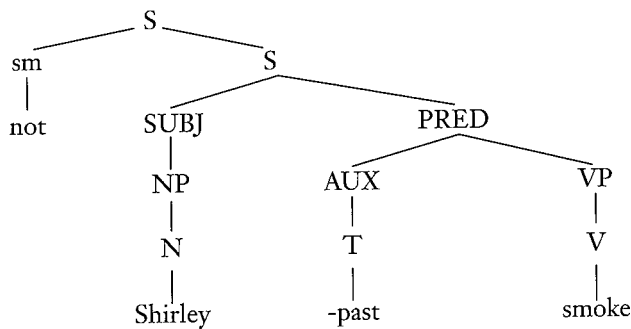
9. (a) Muriel plays the piano.

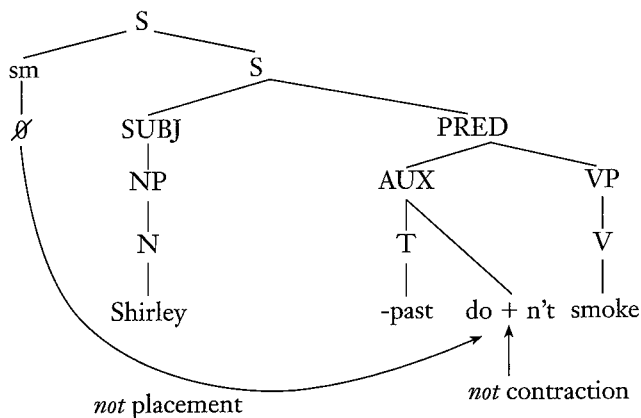
(b) Muriel does not/doesn't play the piano.

10. (a) Shirley smoked.

(b) Shirley did not smoke/didn't smoke.

Shirley didn't smoke.





With Have

One dialect difference that we should note is the negative with the verb *have* or *have got* to show possession. Nelson (2004) lists five possible negative forms of *have/have got*, followed by an indefinite NP and three forms followed by a definite NP:

Have + *Indefinite NP*

1. **I don't have any money.**

2. **I haven't any money.**

3. **I haven't got any money.**

4. **I have no money.**

5. **I've got no money.**

Have + *Definite NP*

I don't have the money.

I haven't the money.

I haven't got the money.

∅

∅

The first three involve *not*-negation and the last two *no*-negation. The form with *have got* is technically the present perfect, but *have got*, as opposed to *have gotten*, is used to show possession in both British English and American English. Based on conversational data from the Longman Corpus of Spoken and Written English (LSWE; Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999), Nelson reports that American English speakers overwhelmingly preferred sentence 4, followed distantly by sentence 1, to show possession (or the absence of it) for indefinite NPs. Showing a greater range of preferences, British English speakers favored sentence 3 the most. For *have* + the definite NP, American English speakers strongly preferred sentence 1, with sentence 3 used far less frequently. Again, in British English, there was a greater use of all available choices, with sentence 3 the one most frequently used. Nelson also looked at these forms in other varieties of English. Using several corpora from the International Corpus of English (ICE), Nelson found that no variety adhered to the American or to the British model.

The Meaning of Negation

There is a duality when it comes to negation. The first kind, descriptive negation, is used to say how things are not in the world, and we discuss this type here within this section on meaning. The second kind is more discourse oriented, and we will treat it under the use section in this chapter.

As for descriptive meaning, logicians would say that there is a symmetry between affirmative and negative propositions:

affirmative statement: **It is the case that...**

negative statement: **It is *not* the case that...**

As you will see in this section and the one that follows, however, the meaning and use of negatives are not as straightforward as this analysis makes it seem. Accordingly, we begin this section of the chapter by acknowledging that the negative particle can have different meanings. Bloom (1970), in her pioneering study of the acquisition of negation by children whose first language is English, observed that most children in her study learned the word *no* rather quickly (certainly by the “terrible twos”!) but used it for a variety of meanings and purposes. For instance, in the data that Bloom collected, the children said “No” for nonexistence, rejection, and denial:

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| “No pocket.” | [There are no pockets.] | (nonexistence) |
| “No dirty soap.” | [I don’t want . . .] | (rejection) |
| “No truck.” | [This isn’t a truck.] | (denial) |

While acknowledging that a developmental psychologist might need to distinguish the meaning of nonexistence from denial, linguist Tottie (1991) sees nonexistence as a subcategory of denial. Saying that something doesn’t exist is denying the (at least implicit) assertion that it does exist. In other words, “No truck” is a denial of the (possibly implicit) assertion, “This is a truck.” Denials, then, may be either explicitly expressed or contextually inferred. Compare the following from Tottie (1991, p. 21):

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| A: John is married. | X: John’s wife is a teacher. |
| B: John isn’t. (married) | Y: John isn’t even married. |

B denies what *A* has just explicitly stated, but *Y* merely denies the implicit presupposition of *X*, the belief of *X* that John is married. Thus, we may sum up Tottie’s treatment of the meaning of negation in English in the following way. There are two meanings of negation in English, rejection and denial, with denial being either explicit or implicit.

Meaning of Negation (Tottie, 1991)

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Rejection (including refusals) | | A: Would you care for scotch? B: No, thanks. I don’t drink. |
| 2. Denial | a. Explicit B’s denial of something that has just been asserted | A: That dress must have been very expensive. B: It wasn’t (expensive). In fact, I bought it at a sale. |
| | b. Implicit B’s denial of something that has not been explicitly asserted. | A: How are you and Bill getting along? B: We are not serious. |

Tottie also mentions a category that she calls “supports,” in which listeners signal that the information that speakers are giving them is received:

| |
|---------------------------------------|
| A: but I left that out because |
| B: yes |
| A: it wasn’t typical |
| B: no |

This category, however, represents only about 8 percent of Tottie’s data, and we will consider this type of negation in conversations in the section on use.

As his own refinement of the denial category, Horn (1989) notes that by denying something, a person can be denying (1) the truth value of the previous proposition, the type we have just discussed, or (2) its form. Horn calls examples of the latter “metalinguistic” (p. 371):

“I didn’t manage to trap two mongese, I managed to trap two mongooses.”

where the morphological form of the prior assertion is challenged, and where the register or stylistic level is being corrected.

“Grandpa isn’t feeling lousy, Johnny, he’s just a tad indisposed.”

Pitts (2011) finds that this form of negation is quite common. Here are some examples she has compiled:

It’s not “definatly,” but “definitely”.

Astrid didn’t eat SOME of the chocolates; she ate ALL of them!

That’s not funny ... it’s absolutely hilarious.

You don’t need your driver’s license or your passport as proof of ID—you need both.

I don’t look like my sister—my sister looks like me.

THE SCOPE OF NEGATION

When we are concerned with the meaning of the negative in English, we must also be concerned with its scope. It is usually said that what is negated in a sentence is everything that comes after the negative particle until the end of the clause.⁸ Thus, there is a meaning contrast in the following pair of sentences:

Joe obviously hasn’t understood a word. (It is obvious that he did not.)

Joe hasn’t obviously understood a word. (It is not obvious that he did.)

It follows, then, that typically the subject of an English sentence will be outside the scope of sentential negation, but it can, of course, be negated with the negative determiner *no*:

***Not anyone was planning to come.**

No one was planning to come.

In speech, the scope of negation is naturally affected not only by the clause boundary, but also by the prosodic boundary. Thompson and Ono (2014) concur that the scope of negation follows the negative morpheme, but they argue that the scope doesn’t end until a clause boundary coincides with a prosodic boundary. In other words, there may be several clauses in a row, but the listener knows to listen for the speaker’s signal that he or she has come to the end of a predicate before the listener can compute the scope of the negation. This can be seen in one of their examples:

Kelly: I don’t <think| I’m gonna like it.||>

Although this utterance is comprised of two clauses, Kelly’s listener knows that the scope of the negation extends to the end of the second clause, which coincides with a prosodic boundary.

We have already pointed out that negation can occur at three levels. Thus, the first sentence in the following set exemplifies word negation, the second sentence illustrates phrasal negation, and the third sentential negation:

- 1. Harry is uncoordinated.**
- 2. Marge has decided not to pay her taxes.**
- 3. John is not at home.**

We can demonstrate that only the third sentence has negation that is sentential in scope by adding a tag question to each. When tag questions in their unmarked form are negative, the sentence is affirmative; when tags are affirmative, the sentence is negative:

1. **Harry is uncoordinated, isn't he?**
2. **Marge has decided not to pay her taxes, hasn't she?**
3. **John is not at home, is he?**

The same question tag test can show that while *no* is only a determiner, its scope can be sentential:

No one came to fix the plumbing problem, did they?

The same is true for the other negative forms associated with *no*:

Nothing is going right, is it?

and with *not*:

They never answered, did they?

We have already noted that unlike in the past and unlike other languages, Standard Modern English does not permit double negation.

I didn't buy no books. (nonstandard)

This is a somewhat simplified prohibition, however, because although it isn't possible to have two negatives that are sentential in scope, it is possible to have a word with a phrasal negative or a phrasal or word negative with a sentential negative. Here is an example from a newspaper interview that has sentential and phrasal negation in the same sentence:

I have friends who decided not to have TV in the house, or who restrict it very strictly.

But I do this for a living! I'm not going to not have a TV, and besides, I like TV! (*Ann Arbor News*, July 28, 2010, in an interview conducted by Leah DuMouchel)

A SHIFT IN MEANING

Usually, when you negate something, the basic meaning of the proposition is maintained in its negative form. In English, however, this is not true in several cases:

1. In the affirmative, *must* can convey obligation, as can its phrasal counterpart *have to*:

We must be on time. (obligation)

We have to be on time. (obligation)

In the negative, however, the meaning of *must* shifts:

We mustn't be at school until 9:00. (It's prohibited that we arrive before 9:00.)

We don't have to be at school until 9:00. (no obligation)

2. Although there can be synonymy between affixal and nonaffixal negation,

I dislike lima beans. = I don't like lima beans.

often they are not semantic equivalents. Semantic nonequivalence occurs when there is an adverbial intensifier:

This is totally untrue. ≠ This is not totally true.

His laugh was so unreal. ≠ His laugh wasn't so real.

Semantic nonequivalence can also occur between sentential negation and negation in prepositional phrases:

My aerobics class isn't continuing for any clear reason. ≠ My aerobics class is continuing for no clear reason.

and before “non-pejorative” nouns (Bailey, 1997):

He's not a doctor. ≠ He's no doctor.

Here, *no*-negation indicates either that he is a doctor but not a very satisfactory one, or that he is pretending to be one—i.e., he is a “quack.”

Ambiguity arises with the interaction of *not*- with quantifiers, especially *all*,

All the guests didn't drink wine.

which can mean that none of the guests drank wine or that some did and some didn't drink wine. In fact, Tottie and Neukom-Hermann (2010) found examples of the *all...not* construction in the British National Corpus (BNC) which were three-way ambiguous. These researchers also reported finding a number of formulaic constructions, especially where *all* is an NP head as in *All is not well* or *All is not lost*. *All is/was not* constructions vastly outnumbered those beginning with *not all is* in the BNC.

3. Finally, there is semantic nonequivalence between positive comparatives and negative equatives with negative polarity adjectives:⁹

Samantha is older than Emily. (positive comparative)

Samantha is not as young as Emily. (negative equative)

With the comparative, we have no real idea about the age of the two people involved. They could be young, elderly, or any age in between. With the negative equative, however, the implication is that both people are young. We will have more to say about negative equatives in the section of this chapter on the use of negatives.

Some versus Any

The last area that we need to deal with regarding meaning and negation has to do with words that accompany the negative particle. Many textbooks point out that following a negative particle, *some* in an affirmative sentence changes to *any* in a negative one:

Laura bought some cheese.

Laura didn't buy any cheese.

This is true even when *some* is part of an indefinite compound pronoun:

Stan has something to wear to the party.

Stan doesn't have anything to wear to the party.

While this is probably a useful generalization to offer beginning-level students, more advanced-level students should know that this is not always the case. *Some* and *any* actually have two main meanings, and one of the meanings is compatible with negation. It is, in fact, possible for *some* to occur in a negative sentence when a meaning of identity is invoked:

I don't eat some foods—lima beans, for example.

In a negative sentence, the *some* is stressed. When *some/any* refer to an indefinite quantity or amount (such as in the previous sentences about Laura and Stan), *some* is weakly stressed and occurs with positive sentences. It is not used with ordinary negative statements. It is also possible for the stressed *any* to occur in an affirmative sentence:

Anyone can do that.

Here, *any* refers to a person of such unspecified identity that it refers to virtually all persons.

Use of the Negative System

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

It is said that while affirmatives and negatives often have a logical semantic symmetry, they have a functional asymmetry: while affirmatives are standardly used to introduce propositions, the chief use of negatives is directed at a proposition already in the discourse (Horn, 1989, pp. 202–203). In other words, the claim is that negatives are used more to respond than to initiate. In social interaction, then, a negative assertion can be a contrary, denying speech act (Givón, 1993, p. 193). As such, we might expect its use to vary with regard to the relative social position of interlocutors; and when there is a marked difference between them, we might expect the subordinate-status speaker to use means other than negation to register disagreement such as “Perhaps you may wish to consider an alternative.”

This expectation was supported by Yaeger-Dror (1985), who has shown that when the negative utterance can be construed as showing disagreement, it is generally realized with reduced intensity and nonprominent pitch on the negative elements. Although one might expect that the negative, being new information, would receive prominent stress, in fact the stress is reduced to mitigate the disagreement, presumably with the goal of maintaining social harmony. Interestingly enough, when negatives are used in disagreeing with oneself or when agreeing with the previous speaker, they are realized with prominent pitch on the negative, often accompanied by enhanced intensity. Here is an example of a prominent negative showing agreement, adapted from Yaeger-Dror (1985, p. 216):

A: You see the fault I am getting at with the schools, they haven't got an answer to the problem.

B: No! They don't.

A: But they think they do.

B: I agree with you.

This is an apt time to remind readers that speech acts come in many forms. For example, we have seen that one of the meanings of the negative is refusal. It does not follow, though, that all refusals have to be negative in form. In investigating refusals made by English and Arabic speakers, Stevens (1993) found very few outright *no's* in the responses of native-speaking subjects in either language. Nonetheless, there were “pragmatic failures” among the refusal strategies adopted by Arabic speakers speaking in English. For instance, the chiding strategy (reprimanding someone as a way of refusing an offer) that works in Arabic is pragmatically inappropriate in English.

Don't make me mad; keep your money with you. (a refusal to another's offer to pay his/her own share of a movie admission)¹⁰

Similarly, Snipp (1992), studying the refusal strategies of Japanese EFL speakers, found that the speakers' intended refusals were sometimes misconstrued by native English speakers because of their indirectness.

For instance, in the following exchange, speaker B, a native Japanese speaker, is indirectly refusing A's request. Speaker A, an English speaker, does not necessarily understand that she is being refused:

A: Nice scarf! Can I borrow it to wear to the dance tomorrow?

B: It is new.

A: Yes. I didn't think I saw you wearing it before.

Not only can negatives seem too direct for certain speech acts; paradoxically, negatives can be used to soften other speech acts in the presence of a perceived social status gap:

Won't you come in, please? (Come in.)

I don't suppose you've had the chance yet. (Have you had the chance yet?)

No As a Discourse Marker

We have not had the opportunity in this volume so far to discuss grammatical constructions being used as discourse markers. Discourse markers connect pieces of text at the discourse level as well as connecting the discourse to the extralinguistic context (Lee-Goldman, 2011). *No* has several functions as a discourse marker. From his work with conversation analysis, Schegloff (2001) observed that when used initially in a conversational turn, *no* is often deployed to mark topic shifts, specifically from non-serious (joking) to serious talk.

Examining conversations from two speech corpora, Lee-Goldman (2011) found support for this observation about the function of *no*, but he felt that this function is a specific type of a more general move to restore the conversation to a topic after an interruption. He posits three distinct functions of turn-initial *no*: to initiate a topic shift, to manage a misunderstanding, and to negotiate a turn. Here is an example of each of these three from Lee-Goldman's data (p. 2640):

Topic-shift: **"I blame her but no um so that's how I kind of got involved."**

Misunderstanding-management: **"No, this is useful, you know, don't worry."**

Turn-negotiation: **"No, go ahead."**

Not versus No

Earlier, we spoke of the semantic nonequivalence of the negative particles *not* and *no* in certain structures, such as those with quantifiers. On other occasions, though, it is difficult to discern a meaning difference between them:

I don't have any time to help this weekend.

I have no time to help this weekend.

What, then, constitutes the difference?

From an examination of the conversations in the London-Lund Corpus and of written prose in the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus,¹¹ a significantly different distribution of the two types of negation in the spoken and written samples was found. The proportions of *not*-negation and *no*-negation were almost exactly reversed in speech and writing. In speech, there was 66 percent *not*-negation and 34 percent *no*-negation, and in writing, there was 37 percent *not*-negation and 63 percent *no*-negation. This difference is significant, at $p < .001$ (Tottie, 1991, p. 321).

The reason for this discrepancy is presumably due to the fact that *no*-negation antedates *not*-negation, and thus the older form is preserved in writing, which is more formal and conservative than speech. When *no*-negation occurs, it is often in collocations such as *see no reason*; *no more*, *no less*; *no longer*; in implicit denials in existential constructions (*There is no milk in the house*), as compared to contrastive *not*-negation in explicit denials (*No. There isn't any milk in the house*); and in object NPs of high-frequency lexical verbs such as *have* (stative possessive), *make*, *give*, and *do* (as a main verb)—for example, *She has no excuse*.

A contextual analysis of North American English by Tai (1995) bears out Tottie's (1991) findings. Although they are trends, not absolutes, *not any* is more likely to occur in speaking and explicit denials. Tai also found that the trends held for the distribution of *not anything* and *nothing* (i.e., *not anything* tended to be found more in speaking and explicit denials), although the trends were somewhat weaker. What was an additional factor with this pair, though, was syntactic complexity. While *not anything* goes with shorter modifiers, *nothing* goes with long modifiers:

Most mail these days could consist of nothing that could truly be called a letter.

It's just as well, because we can't do anything with it. (Tai, 1995)

AFFIXAL VERSUS NONAFFIXAL NEGATION

The most pertinent finding in Tottie's (1991) study on the usage difference between affixal and nonaffixal negation was that affixal negation was far more prevalent in writing than in speech. In fact, two-thirds of the negatives in the written sample were affixal negatives, whereas two-thirds of the negatives in the spoken sample were nonaffixal. A great many of the affixal negatives were prenominal adjectives, such as *impossible*. Tottie attributes this finding to the fact that different discourse strategies are used in speaking and writing due to differences in processing conditions: in conversation, there is time pressure from online production, whereas in the writing process, there is more planning time. Because of the greater pressure imposed on speakers, they tend to produce utterances where one idea follows another in a fragmented discourse, whereas writers typically have more time to combine and superimpose ideas and can, therefore, mold their thoughts into a more integrated discourse (cf. Chafe, 1982). The use of prenominal or attributive adjectives constitutes "the single most prevalent feature of written language," according to Chafe (1982, p. 42). Even when they use adjectives as subject predicates (*The situation is impossible*) rather than as premodifiers, writers prefer to use affixal negation, which is the more integrated option.

Another reason that affixal negation is favored in writing is that it is used in conjoined structures (*difficult and unbearable*/**difficult and not bearable*), and conjoined phrases and complex clauses are more characteristic of writing than speaking.

CONTRACTED VERSUS UNCONTRACTED NEGATIVES

We wrote of (pro)noun + auxiliary contraction (which includes the copula *be*) in Chapter 7 (e.g., *He's not here*). As we pointed out then, and earlier in this chapter, it is also possible for *not* contraction to take place (*He isn't here*). Quite a lot of research has taken place attempting to pinpoint when the *not* is contracted and when it occurs in its full form. One explanation pits the Cognitive Prominence Principle against the Social Agreement Principle (Yaeger-Dror, 1997). It seems that the *not* is uncontracted when it is semantically focal, such as when there is a disagreement in a debate; however, with a disagreement in a normal social interaction, the *not* is contracted because to do otherwise is "face-threatening" and therefore dispreferred. Thus, the difference between informational and interactional registers becomes a crucial factor.

In later research, Yaeger-Dror, Hall-Lew, and Deckert (2002) tackle the issue of negative contraction and auxiliary contraction further. They conclude that aux-contraction occurs in "unscripted" situations, meaning more informal ones. This makes sense. However, interestingly, their research also showed a dialect difference, with *not* contraction being favored in the northern part of the United States and aux-contraction being preferred in the southern part. They also found significant regional variation in the British data they examined, although according to Tagliamonte and Smith (2002), dialect differences are not clear-cut. Contraction is also correlated with sentence type. *Not* contraction occurs readily in interrogatives and imperatives, as we will see in later chapters.

NEGATIVE EQUATIVES

Returning briefly to our discussion of the contrast between comparatives and negative equatives, we should comment on their potential different uses. In general, it is considered more tactful to use negative equatives rather than comparatives when the adjective has negative polarity. For example, in the following, the negative polarity adjective *dumb* is very

rude in the comparative, whereas its positive polarity counterpart in a negative equative is considered more indirect and less rude:

Moe is dumber than Curly.

Moe is not as intelligent as Curly.

USAGE-BASED NEGATION

This discussion of negation is a good time to revisit the point that we made in Chapter 1 about lexicogrammatical constructions. Although what we have presented so far with the negative (e.g., the position of *not* in a sentence) seems orderly enough to be characterized as rule-governed, it is also the case that there are constructions that don't quite fit any syntactic mold conveniently, yet which are important. For purpose of illustration, we will briefly consider the pattern *not that* (Delahunty, 2006; Schmid, 2013). *Not that* has a denying function; i.e., it “instructs the addressees to reject a possible inference of what was said before...” (Schmid, 2013, p. 76). Schmid cites an example from the British National Corpus:

... [I'm] **only working a few days but it's surprising the teaching days I do** [pause] **really, that really does cut into my time at home.** [pause] **Not that I mind but it just means ...** [KGB 1873]

Schmid (2013) takes us through the possible sequence of inferential steps: “if something cuts into time spent at home, this is an unpleasant situation” > “we normally mind unpleasant situations” > “I deny that I mind” (p. 99).

Schmid (2013) argues that the construction *not that* is not an elliptical version of a more complete syntactic structure with a copula, e.g., *it is not the fact that...* because, among other reasons, they are not mutually substitutable. Nevertheless, analyzing 1,759 exemplars of this construction extracted from the BNC reveals that the environments they are in and the functions they serve are patterned. Not surprisingly, in keeping with the observation that *not that* gives us the speaker's perspective, *not that* is used as a part of one speaker's turn in the large majority of occurrences in the spoken corpus, often with the pronouns, *I*, *we*, and *you* functioning as topics and subjects.

The theoretical import of this discussion is that grammar need not be conceived of as a rule-based system. Instead, the usage-based view is that speakers encounter and learn frequently occurring patterns, which they subsequently draw on to make meaning appropriate to contexts of use, and that these patterns constitute their grammar. Speakers may or may not abstract generalizations from the patterns. While we find such theoretical positions attractive, teachers cannot afford to be purists. As we said in Chapter 1, teachers need to work with students on rules and patterns.¹² The pedagogical point of this discussion is that there are lexicogrammatical patterns that students will encounter, and some students will want or need to learn to use them, what Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) call “lexical phrases” and what Wray (2008) calls “formulaic sequences.” While it would be beyond the scope of this volume to list them comprehensively, being alert to their existence will be helpful.

FUNCTIONAL NEGATIVES

We conclude the use section of this chapter by pointing out that just as words need not be marked affixally in order to convey negativity (cf. Jespersen's inherent negatives), so, too, can positive statements and questions have negative meaning, depending on the discourse context:

Joe: Did you ace the final, Ray?

Ray: Are you kidding? I'm lucky I passed!

In other words, although the question and statement in Ray's response are formally positive, they function as negatives.¹³

Conclusion

This chapter provides an introduction to the negation system in English. As you undoubtedly can tell, because of the many words and structures that are included in the system, you will encounter the topic of negation repeatedly in the chapters that follow. Beginning-level students will need to practice the forms of negation—both the syntax and the patterns in a meaningful way. Issues concerning the use of negation will arise for intermediate and advanced-level English students.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** When students are first learning to place the negative particle *not* in its correct position in sentences, it is useful for them to practice unscrambling sentences with auxiliary verbs and the copula *be*. Write 12 to 15 sentences. Put one word of each sentence on a card or slip of paper.

GUY MAY NOT BE GOING TO FRANCE NEXT SUMMER

BUDI IS NOT AN ENGINEER

NORIKO HAS NOT VISITED CANADA

Shuffle the cards for each sentence and give three sets of shuffled cards to each small group of students. The students' task is to unscramble each of the three sentences and put them in grammatical order. When the groups are finished, they should mix the cards for each sentence again and swap cards with another group. The procedure should be repeated several times so that each group gets to practice unscrambling at least 12 sentences. Afterward, you can ask the students to make their observations concerning the placement of *not* in sentences with auxiliary or *be* verbs.

2. **Form.** Tell students that the sentences they made are accurate, but an English speaker would probably not use the full form of the negative. Have students remove the card with the *not* on it in each of the final set of three sentences they were working on, turn it over, and write the contraction *-n't* on the reverse side. Students should put the contraction next to the verb to which it is attached, where that is possible (notice that in the sentence with *may*, it is not possible). They should then read the sentences out loud. You can correct their pronunciation of the contracted form as needed.
3. **Form.** As a presentation activity, to introduce your students to the need for the operator *do*, present the class with the following:

JOHN CAN SWIM

Next, give the students the words **NOT** and **DIVE** and ask students to change the sentence using these two words. After practicing a few of these familiar sentences with the *be* verb or other auxiliary verbs, you can introduce the *do* beginning with plural subjects such as the following:

CHILDREN LIKE CANDY

Then change **CANDY** to **HOMEWORK** and give the students **DO** and **NOT**. Students are asked where the new words go. You should help students see that the *do* verb is carrying the tense and showing number agreement with the subject. This might become clearer when you introduce the next sentence:

CARLA **SPEAK** **S** **SPANISH**

After **SPANISH** has been changed to **CHINESE**, students are again asked to put **DO** and **NOT** in the right position in the new sentence. Then the **S** on **SPEAKS** is moved over to follow **DO** (the first verb form in the sentence), at which point a newly introduced form, **DOES**, can be substituted for **DO** and **S**. Students should have an opportunity to practice several more of these sentences together before doing them on their own. Notice that even when working on form, we don't ignore meaning. By changing the sentence from "John can swim" to "John cannot dive," rather than "John cannot swim," the truth value of the negative is plausible.

4. **Meaning.** Students can practice contradicting when you or other students deliberately make statements about members of the class that are not true (along with a few that are true). Students can be invited to do so after the teacher gives a few examples:

Teacher: Carla comes from China.

The class answers:

Students: No, she doesn't come from China. She comes from Argentina.

Teacher: The person behind Paulo is Jorge.

The class answers:

Students: No, it isn't Jorge. It's Wu Min.

Teacher: Boris is married.

Students: Yes, Boris is married.

5. **Meaning.** Show students two pictures that have differences between them. Ask students to find the differences and use negative sentences to define them. In other words, they have to say what is not in one picture as contrasted with another. Later, divide the group into pairs and give each student a picture, which the students are not allowed to show each other. Each student has to converse with his/her partner to discover the differences between their pictures without showing the pictures. Encourage them to contract where possible. For example:

A: The time on the clock is 12:00 in picture A.

B: The time isn't 12:00 in picture B; it's 2:00.

6. **Form.** While students will need practice in producing all the contracted forms of negation, one form that may give them special difficulty in listening is the colloquial English *don't* in *I da wanna go* and *I dunno*. Another is *can't*, since English speakers distinguish *He can come* from *He can't come* more from its rhythmic structure and vowel quality than from its other segmental sounds.

He can come [hiy kən kum]

He can't come [hiy kæn kum]

Give students practice listening to you say one or the other of these with regard to a particular skill. You can hold up contrasting pictures and ask students to point to the one that you describe.

Teacher: (holds up two pictures) He can play the piano.
(Students point to one of the pictures.)

Teacher: Yes. (holds up two new pictures) He can't swim.
(Students point to one of the pictures.)

7. **Meaning.** In practicing the difference between *don't have to* and *must not*, students could be asked to make comparative statements about classroom manners in two countries. For example:
- In Malaysia, you must stand when the teacher enters the classroom, but in the United States, you don't have to.
In Malaysia, you mustn't speak unless the teacher calls on you. That's sometimes true in the United States too.
8. **Use.** Intermediate-level students can be taught to make tactful comparisons using negative equatives. They can be asked to bring in one or two pictures of famous people. Then, they show their pictures and make statements like the following:
- Madonna is not as talented as Meryl Streep.
Tom Cruise's new movie is not as good as his last one.
9. **Use.** For more advanced students, you might play a segment of a U.S. presidential debate (<http://www.c-spanvideo.org/topic/PresidentialDebates>). Yaeger-Dror, Hall-Lew, and Deckert (2002) suggest that in the Nixon-Kennedy debate, for instance, there are more full-form negatives because the information value of the negative is high and because there is a preference for disagreement in debates. See if your students find more full-form negatives than contracted ones and if they can figure out why this might be so.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. *Provide original example sentences to illustrate the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples:*

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>a. sentence-level negation</p> <p>b. phrasal negation</p> <p>c. affixal negation</p> <p>d. <i>do</i> support</p> | <p>e. <i>not</i> contraction</p> <p>f. <i>no</i> determiner</p> <p>g. negative equative</p> <p>h. negative indefinite pronoun</p> |
|---|---|

2. *For the following sentences, draw the trees and arrows to show where the *do* is inserted and how the *not* moves and *is* contracted, where applicable:*
 - a.** Alice doesn't laugh at my jokes.
 - b.** They have no children.
 - c.** Meg is not about to listen to you.
 - d.** I can't understand the lyrics.
 - e.** The boys aren't playing football in the fall.

3. *In what way are the following sentences in each set related? How are they different?*

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>a. Sam is not working these days. Sam's not working these days. Sam isn't working these days.</p> <p>b. Bill is shorter than Richard. Bill is not as tall as Richard.</p> | <p>c. Trudy doesn't remember anyone. Trudy remembers no one.</p> <p>d. I would say that is inadvisable. I would say that is not advisable.</p> |
|--|--|

Test your ability to apply what you know.

4. *The students who have said the following, have communicated successfully, i.e. we understand the meaning. However, they have not done so in terms of Standard English norms. What would you tell them?*
- *That boy no like me.
 - *I not understand.
 - *Seth is very unpatient.
 - I didn't do nothing. (nonstandard)
 - *Not any students will come to school today.
5. *What is the difference between the following two sentences?*
- They might not have tried before.**
They might have not tried before.
6. *A student tells you that he has been told that any is always used in place of some in a negative sentence, but that he heard another teacher say the following: I can't recall some of their names. The student asks you if this is grammatical. What would you say?*
7. *Many relatively advanced ESL/EFL students systematically refuse to contract the negative particle in their speech. How would you help them understand the fact that contraction is normally used in speech and informal writing?*
8. *Early in this chapter, we listed some verbs that are inherently negative. Besides the semantics of verbs like fail, what sort of syntactic evidence can you adduce that would demonstrate their negativity?*

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For linguistic treatments of negation, consult:

de Swart, H. (2010). *Expression and interpretation of negation: An OT typology*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
Iyeiri, Y. (Ed.). (2005). *Aspects of negation in English*. Amsterdam, Netherlands/Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

For a historical perspective on English negation, see:

Chapman, D., & Skousen, R. (2005). Analogical modeling and morphological change: The case of the adjectival negative prefix in English. *English Language and Linguistics*, 9(2), 333–357.
Larrivé, P., & Ingham, R. P. (2011). *The evolution of negation. Beyond the Jespersen cycle*. Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter.
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Wallage, P. (2012). Negative inversion, negative concord and sentential negation in the history of English. *English Language and Linguistics*, 16(1), 3–33.

For cross-linguistic information on negation, consult:

Dahl, O. (1979). Typology of sentence negation. *Linguistics*, 17, 79–106.
Horn, L. R. (2010). *The expression of negation*. Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter.

For usage-based/cognitive linguistic treatments, see:

Bybee, J. (2010). *Language, usage, and cognition*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
Croft, W., & Cruse, D. A. (2004). *Cognitive linguistics*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
Langacker, R. W. (2008). *Cognitive grammar: A basic introduction*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Tyler, A. (2012). *Cognitive linguistics and second language learning*. New York, NY/London, England: Routledge.

For pedagogical help with basic negative formation, see:

Badalamenti, V., & Henner-Stanchina, C. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 1* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
O'Sullivan, J. K. (2007). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 1*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For pedagogical suggestions with negative equatives, see:

Wisniewska, I., Riggenbach, H., & Samuda, V. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 2* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For suggestions on teaching some, not...any, no, and none, see:

Carlisi, K. (2008). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 3*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Endnotes

1. For example, in Bahasa Indonesia, *bukan* is used to negate a nominal; *tidak* negates verbs, adjectives, and adverbials; and *belum* negates a past action, event, or state and could be glossed as "not yet."
2. A similar sort of pattern is the use of *no-* as an adjective-forming prefix as in, for example, *no-fault insurance*, *no-wax floors*, *no-good rascal*, *no-win situation*, and so on.
3. Sometimes this assimilation is overgeneralized to other parts of speech where the same *in-* is not used as a negative prefix. For example, you may hear people say /imput/ instead of /input/ for *input*.
4. Readers might expect to see *none* on this list. Actually, *none* is foremost a quantifier (see Chapter 17) and only pronominal with appropriate ellipsis.

5. Close (1992) identifies six such operations:
- To make negatives: **I haven't done my homework.**
 - To make questions: **Have you done your homework?**
 - To make negative questions: **Haven't you done your homework?**
 - To make tag questions: **You've done your homework, haven't you?**
 - To emphasize: **I háve done my homework.** (the operator is stressed)
 - To substitute for the whole predicate: **My brother hasn't done his homework, but I have.** (in order to avoid repetition)
6. And some are rarely if ever contracted; e.g., **mayn't, ?oughtn't*. Horn (1989) argues that for this reason, as well as for others, contracted auxiliary verbs should be analyzed as separate lexical items rather than syntactic combinations of sentential *not* and the first auxiliary verb (p. 480). While Horn's contention has theoretical merit, for ESL/EFL pedagogical reasons, it seems to make sense to treat the contracted auxiliary verb as being syntactically derived from *not* + auxiliary verb.
7. One exception is its use in stylized rhetoric. When John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as president of the United States, he exhorted Americans: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."
- It is also used in certain other formulaic utterances, such as *I kid you not*, or *She loves me not*.
8. As Givón (1993) points out, it is possible for negation of a main clause or negation of a complement clause to yield similar, if not identical, meanings:

I don't think that she came.

I think that she didn't come.

This is not true for all verbs, however. Common verbs that follow this pattern are *believe, expect, feel, imagine, intend, plan, propose, reckon, suppose, think, want, and wish*.

9. *Old* is perceived as positive and *young* as negative for age, in that we always ask, "How old are you?" See the discussions in Chapters 20 and 34 for more on the polarity feature of degree adjectives.
10. Stevens attributes this strategy to the fact that it is not culturally appropriate in Arab society for each person to pay only for him/herself.
11. These are British-English corpora, but the findings are believed to hold for American English as well, with the possible exception that American English favors *not*-negation even more than British English.
12. See, for instance, Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) examples of *not* as a marker of nonverbal negation: *not all, not one, not even, not* + affixially negated adjectives (e.g., *not unattractive*), certain adverbs (*not surprisingly*), and others (pp. 807–810), some of which we take up elsewhere in this book.
13. Conversely, some formal negatives function as ironic positive statements rather than negatives; for example:

I can't believe it!

Yes/No Questions

Introduction

In this chapter, we begin our treatment of questions in English. English speakers have a profusion of question types available. Here are some of them.

| Question Type | Example |
|--|---|
| 1. Yes/no question (sometimes called a <i>polar question</i>) | Is dinner ready yet? |
| 2. Statement-form question (statement syntax accompanied by rising intonation) | You come from Texas? |
| 3. Negative yes/no question | Shouldn't we send a card? |
| 4. Focused question (with a stressed element) | Was it Nicóle who won the Oscar? |
| 5. <i>Wh</i> -question (which typically uses a <i>wh</i> -question word—e.g., <i>who</i> , <i>what</i> , <i>where</i> —to seek specific information) | What movie is playing downtown? |
| 6. Negative <i>wh</i> -question | Why doesn't he stop barking? |
| 7. Question tag, negative tag | Traffic is heavy at this time of day, isn't it? |
| 8. Question tag, affirmative tag | You didn't go, did you? |
| 9. Alternative question (also called a <i>choice question</i> ; it has a special intonation contour) | Would you rather live in the city or the country? |
| 10. Rhetorical "question" | Haven't we had enough conflict? |
| 11. Exclamatory "question" | Are you kidding! |
| 12. Indirect question | I wonder if we should start. |

Of course, it is questionable to call all of these *questions* in the interrogative mood sense of asking someone something. Certainly, there are questions that don't seek information, and there are statements that do (de Ruiter, 2012). To prove this point and to deal with this assortment of question types, we will spread our coverage over three chapters. The first four types will be dealt with in this chapter; types 5 and 6 will be covered in Chapter 13; types 7–11 will be handled in Chapter 14; and type 12 will not be discussed much until Chapter 33, when we take up other forms of indirect or reported speech. We begin with question type 1.

Many of the world's languages form *yes/no* questions simply by adding rising intonation to declarative statements. English speakers do this, too (see type 2), but the unmarked form of an English *yes/no* question, like (1), requires rising intonation and a different word order from a statement—one that inverts the subject and the operator. Only a few languages other than English use a word order different from that of statements in making questions—German, for example; on the whole, most languages do not do so. Instead, as Ultan (1978) reports in a typological study of 79 languages from various language families, most languages simply use a distinctive intonation pattern for questions. The second most popular option among the languages Ultan studied was the addition of a special interrogative particle to either the beginning or end of the question or attached directly to a word that is being queried. Here is a Chinese example from Zhu and Wu (2011, p. 634):

ta shangxue + ma
He go school + question particle
 'Does/did he go to school?'

At an early stage in the history of English, questions were made with the use of rising intonation alone. Only much later did inversion come about in question formation. The earliest form of this inversion was with the subject and the main verb:

Know you the way to Ipswich?

It took much longer for the rule requiring subject and operator inversion to become standard.

Todeva (1991) has pointed out the parallelism between the evolution of the English language and the acquisition of English as either a first or second language: learners of English are known to first use rising intonation; only after several more stages do they master inversion. The following is a somewhat modified developmental pattern for untutored learners that we have adapted from Pienemann, Johnston, and Brindley (1988) (as reported in Ortega, 2009, p. 35):

| Stage | Example |
|--|---|
| I: Fragments + rising intonation | A hat? |
| II: Statements + rising intonation | You are tired? |
| III: Place question marker in front of statement | Is your daughter work here? |
| IV: <i>Be</i> inversion | Are you listening me? |
| V: <i>Do</i> support | Do you like ice cream? |
| VI: Other question types | Don't you see? I wonder why they left. |

Of course, as with all second language (L2) data, these stages are not discrete, and within each there is certainly individual variation. Also, from early on, learners make considerable use of formulaic questions, such as "How are you?" Nonetheless, it can generally be said that inversion is the initial learning challenge for learners, and its mastery takes a while. The challenge is no doubt made more difficult by the fact that English speakers frequently do not use inverted questions in conversations; hence, the exemplars to which ESL/EFL learners are exposed are inconsistent with regard to inversion. We return to this point later in this chapter.

As different as English question formation is from Chinese, Zhu and Wu (2011) observe that it is not necessarily the structural differences that cause learners difficulty. What is problematic is the assumption that learners already know how questions function. For instance, an apparently straightforward teacher question—*Any questions?*—can be multifunctional (Waring, 2012). Even more dubious is the assumption that learners know how to respond

to questions. Replying is not as straightforward as it may seem. This is a problem, given that it is well known that early interactions between learners and speakers of English are replete with questions directed to the learners for the purpose of comprehension checks and clarification requests, and these questions are adjusted to enhance learners' comprehension, which sometimes results in ungrammatical input (Long, 1981).

In this chapter, we begin by examining the inversion rule in English under the heading of form. Other comments about form are directed to the intonation pattern of *yes/no* questions and to the structure of short answers. In order to help teachers guide students on how to respond to questions, we also comment on the meaning of *yes/no* questions and their variations. In the section on use, we make some observations about short answers to *yes/no* questions. We also discuss contraction in negative questions and the use of elliptical questions, questions that take less than full form. We conclude this chapter by pointing out other functions that *yes/no* questions can fulfill, not only in informal language use, but also in academic language.

The Form of *Yes/No* Questions

Yes/no questions are often defined as questions for which either “Yes” or “No” is the expected answer:¹

Are you going to the party? { **Yes (I am).**
 { **No (I'm not).**

Inverting the subject and operator gives rise to the characteristic syntactic form of *yes/no* questions in English

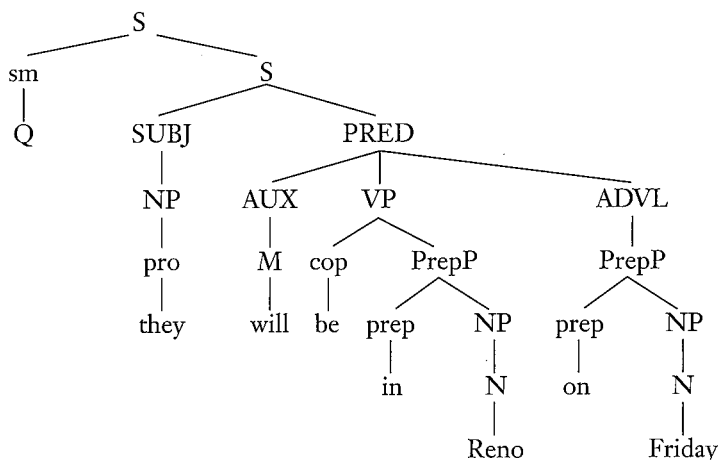
SUBJECT-OPERATOR INVERSION

With an Auxiliary Verb

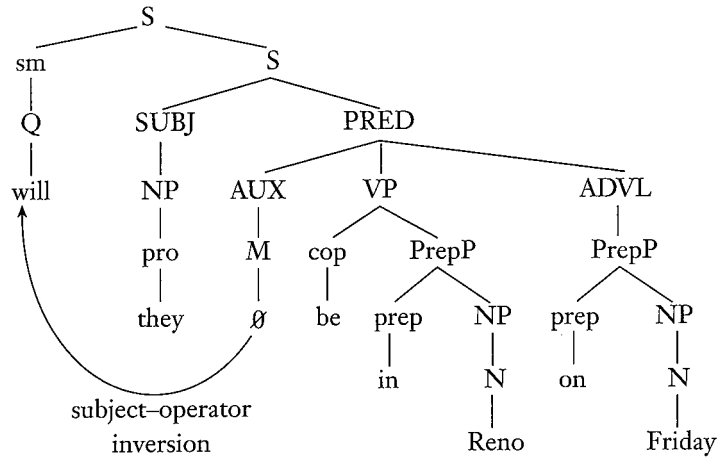
Consider the following questions:

1. **Will they be in Reno on Friday?**
2. **Was she able to finish in time?**
3. **Has Maricor gone home?**
4. **Are you doing anything tomorrow?**

Here is the tree for the first sentence:



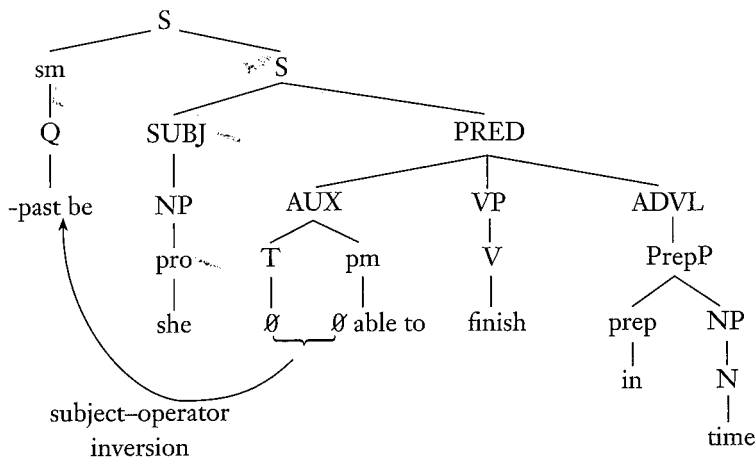
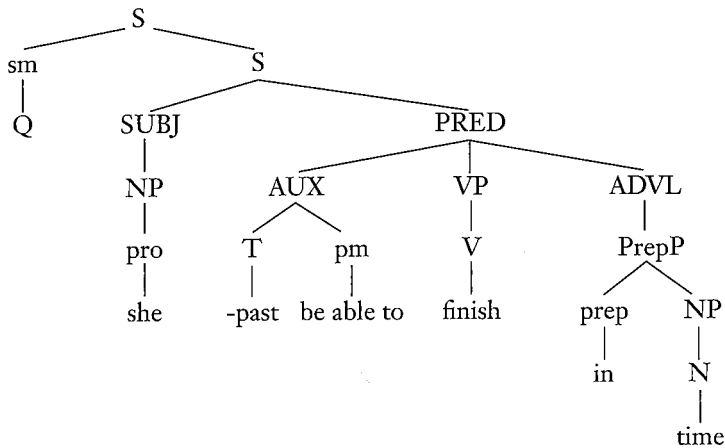
The Q marker is treated as a sentence marker because its scope applies to the whole sentence. Subject-operator inversion inverts the subject with the auxiliary verb *will*:



Notice that if this sentence had two auxiliary verbs—for example, if we were to add *be + ing* to the *will* in question (1)—the operator is only the *first* auxiliary verb in the auxiliary string

Will they be gambling in Reno on Friday?

that is inverted with the subject. Furthermore, when the auxiliary has more than one element, as it does with the phrasal modal in question (2), it is only the *first* of the elements in the first auxiliary verb (again the operator) which, along with the tense marker (if there is one) is inverted with the subject. Here are the trees for question (2) as an illustration of this last point:

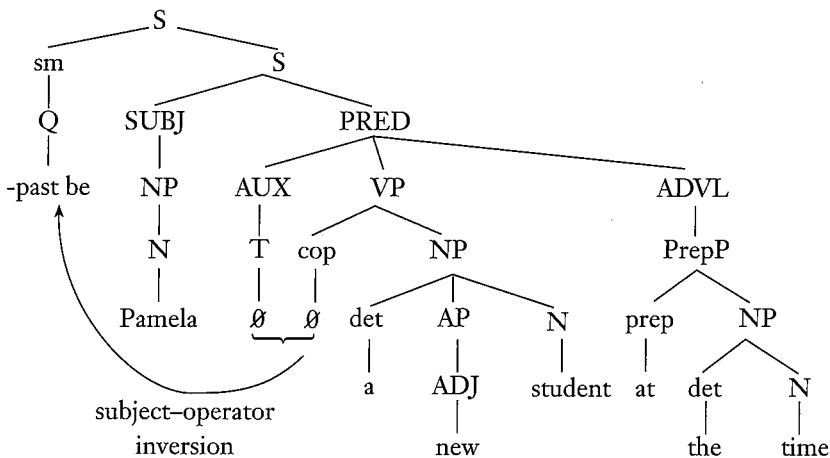
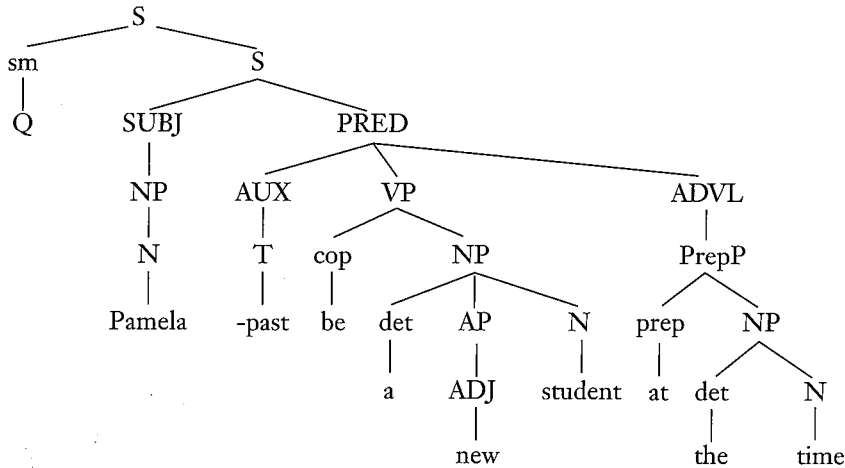


With the Be Copula

As you saw in the previous chapter on negation, the negative particle *not* (a sentential adverb) is placed after the first auxiliary verb. In this chapter, we see that it is also the first auxiliary verb that is involved in question formation. Similarly, just as the *not* follows the *be* copula verb when no auxiliary verb is present in negative sentences, so does the *be* copula verb serve as the inverted operator when no auxiliary verb is present in *yes/no* question formation:

Pamela was a new student at the time.

Was Pamela a new student at the time?



With Other Verbs

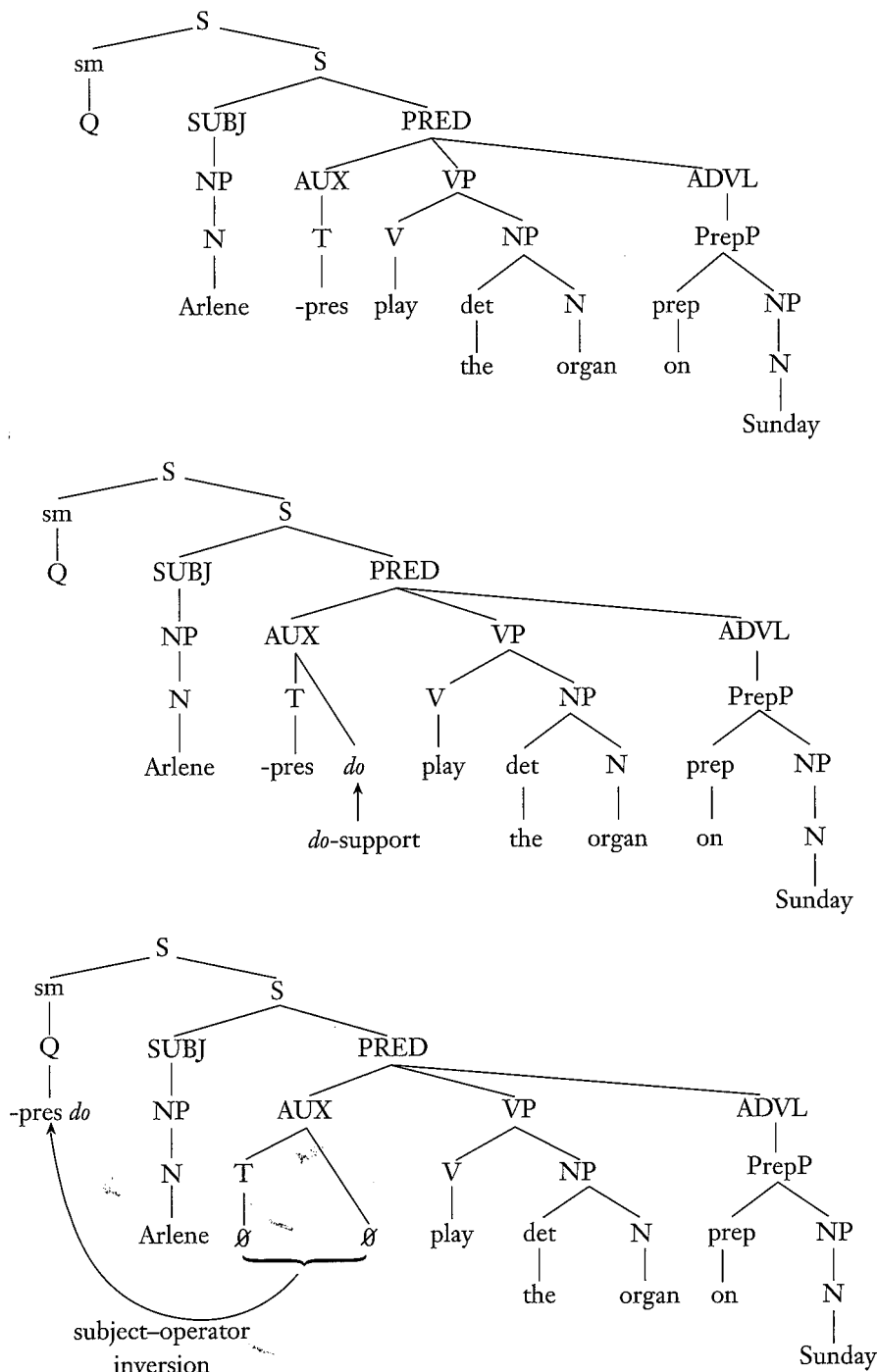
When a sentence has no auxiliary or *be* verb, a different condition occurs. Notice that we cannot simply invert the subject and the verb, as we did with the *be* verb, to form a grammatical question:

Arlene plays the organ on Sunday.

***Plays Arlene the organ on Sunday?**

Although, as we have already noted, such forms were acceptable in historically earlier forms of English, and their equivalents are grammatical in certain languages today (such as German and the Scandinavian languages), the main verb in the sentence is not inverted with the subject in Modern English.²

Once again, we can point to the parallelism between negation and *yes/no* question formation. Recall that to make a sentence negative when it has no auxiliary verb or *be* copula, the operator *do* is inserted. Likewise, in *yes/no* question formation, *do* is added to function as an operator when there is no auxiliary verb or *be* copula verb to invert with the subject:



Do support is also needed for a few phrasal modals:
used to: **Did you use to go skiing when you lived in Vermont?**
have to: **Does Brent have to work on weekends?**

In most cases, however, the first element in phrasal modals is the operator, which inverts with the subject when subject-operator inversion is applied:

be to: **Are you to report tomorrow?**

In sum, whether or not you use explicit terminology with your ESL/EFL students, they need to understand that in a *yes/no* question, the first auxiliary verb in the sentence should appear before the subject. If there is no auxiliary verb, the *be* copula should be used before the subject. If there is no auxiliary verb or *be* copula, then *do* must be introduced at the beginning of the question and must mark the tense of the question.

INTONATION IN YES/NO QUESTIONS

In addition to inverted word order and sometimes the addition of the *do* operator, English also uses intonation to mark *yes/no* questions. *Yes/no* questions typically display a raised, nonterminal intonation.³ To understand how this is articulated, consider that statement intonation in English usually rises on the last stressed syllable of the last content word and then falls on that word in the sentence. For example:

② Mike is learning to use a computer. ③ ①

Unmarked *yes/no* question intonation typically rises through the same stressed syllable and then stays high, what is called a “low rise contour” (Hedberg, Sosa, & Görgülü, to appear):

② Is Mike learning to use a computer? ③ ③

We must quickly qualify this analysis, however. Couper-Kuhlen (2012) convincingly argues that the intonation of questions depends on the local interaction and the nature of the communicative activity. For instance, in her data from radio broadcasts, a higher proportion of *yes/no* questions with rising intonation is used when conversational topics are being introduced. Later, as the topics are being elaborated upon, more questions with falling intonation are used, although they are still the minority. An additional factor is the epistemic stance reflected in the question. For instance, if the questioner expects a positive response, then he or she may well use a falling intonation rather than a rising one. All of this indicates (as we stated in Chapter 1) that as with all decontextualized rules, they may well be useful as “rules of thumb,” but they may not hold up in dynamic interactions.

SHORT ANSWERS TO YES/NO QUESTIONS

It is unlikely that the response to a *yes/no* question will be in the form of a full sentence:

Is Ramón an engineering student?

Yes. { He is } an engineering student.
 { He's }

No. He isn't an engineering student.

Although these answers are possible, such complete replies may give the listener the impression that the speaker is annoyed by the question. ESL/EFL teachers should be aware of the possible negativity expressed by a full-sentence answer to a *yes/no* question and not always insist on their students answering questions with full sentences, as teachers

sometimes do. A more common form of answer, although this too is restricted in its distribution (as you will see in the section on use later in this chapter), is the short answer:

Is Ramón an engineering student? { **Yes, he is.**
No, he isn't.

If the *yes/no* question begins with the copula *be*, as in our example sentence, the short answer is formed with the same form of the *be* verb that appears in the question. Notice that *be* cannot be contracted in an affirmative short answer. All affirmative short answers must be followed by at least one other word, or else the full form of *be* must be used:

***Yes, he's.**

Yes, he's studying electrical engineering.

Yes, he is.

When the *yes/no* question contains an auxiliary verb, that operator is used in the short answer.

| | | |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| With a modal | Can she go? | { Yes, she can. No, she can't. |
| With a phrasal modal (the first element) | Is she able to go? | { Yes, she is. No, she isn't. |
| With perfect aspect | Has she gone? | { Yes, she has. No, she hasn't. |
| With progressive aspect | Is she going? | { Yes, she is. No, she isn't. |

If the sentence contains more than one auxiliary verb, the short answer may also contain an auxiliary verb in addition to the operator, although when the second or third auxiliary verb is some form of *be*, the speaker usually omits it; for example,

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| With modal and perfect | Will she have gone? | { Yes, she will have. No, she won't have. |
| | (often pronounced with the "have" reduced to /əv/) | |
| With modal, perfect, and progressive | Will she have been worrying? | { Yes, she will have (been). No, she won't have (been). |

If *do* is the operator in the question, it is also used in the short answer with the same tense used in the question:

Does she go there often? { **Yes, she does.**
No, she doesn't.

The Meaning of Yes/No Questions

Although not all linguists agree (cf. Bolinger, 1978), most feel that an acceptable paraphrase of a *yes/no* question might be *Is it the case that...?*, in which the speaker is asking for confirmation or denial of a proposition. Such an analysis implies that *yes/no* questions are neutral questions—that is, there is no expectation regarding whether an affirmative or negative reply is likely. Chalker (1984), for example, calls them “open questions” because the speaker has an open mind about the answer. However, there are morphosyntactic and/or phonological variations of such open questions, which *are* influenced by the speaker's expectations. Such is the case with negative *yes/no* questions.

NEGATIVE YES/NO QUESTIONS

Negative *yes/no* questions have a different orientation. In the following contrast,

Is Josh playing soccer this year?

Isn't Josh playing soccer this year?

the first question is neutral with regard to speaker expectations, but the negative question signals that the speaker has reason to believe that something he or she had previously thought was true might not be so. Here, in using the negative question, the speaker is signaling that he or she expected that Josh would be playing soccer but, because of new evidence, now realizes that this may not be true. The speaker may be hoping for a positive answer but not really expecting one. Because the prior expectation tends to be aligned with the speaker's wishes, Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) add that negative questions can express disappointment or annoyance because the speaker's earlier wishes or expectations now seem not to be true any longer:

Aren't we going to the movies? (I thought we had planned to.)

Didn't you say that the test would be next week? (I thought that was what you had announced.)

Heritage's (2002) study of news interviews finds that interviewers' negative questions are posed "under the auspices of an ideology of 'neutrality,'" (p. 1430), but in reality allow for the interviewer to project an expected answer. Here is an example, adapted from Heritage, from a presidential press conference on March 7, 1997, which took place between President Bill Clinton and reporter Helen Thomas of UPI (2002, p. 1432):

Thomas: Mister President, in your zeal for funds during the last campaign, didn't you put the Vice President and Maggie and all the others in your administration top side in a very vulnerable position,

Clinton: I disagree with that. How are we vulnerable because...

President Clinton voices disagreement with Thomas's question, indicating that he interprets it not as a request for information so much as an assertion, which he rejects. Admittedly, press conferences tend to be more confrontational than ordinary interactions, but Heritage (2002) notes that in his data, such responses are recurrent in both British and American English.

While not all negative questions are posed in an aggressive manner, responding to them can create semantic problems for many ESL/EFL learners (Bevington, 1979). For example, native speakers of most Asian and West African languages react to a negative *yes/no* question in a literal manner in their own language—they agree or disagree with its form:

Don't you have bananas? { **Yes (we have no bananas).**
 { **No (we have bananas).**

Speakers of English, on the other hand, react to negative *yes/no* questions as if they were affirmative ones; i.e., as if they were disagreeing or agreeing with an implicit assertion:

Don't you have bananas? { **Yes (we do).**
 { **No (we don't).**

While negative questions are not all that frequent in normal conversation, the miscommunication that results from not understanding the underlying expectation may warrant teaching ESL/EFL students how to reply to them. We should also mention that

Koshik (2002) showed that teachers' questions do not have to be overtly marked as negative to be interpreted as such. For instance, a teacher's positive polarity question during a writing conference with a student can be construed as a negative assertion; e.g., *Is this the best way to start your paper?* Presumably, this "reverse polarity assertion" occurs elsewhere as well.

FOCUSED YES/NO QUESTIONS

So far we have been considering *yes/no* questions where the whole state, activity, or event is being queried. Sometimes, however, *yes/no* questions can be more focused. A proposition may be thought to be true in general, but one of its specific components—subject, verb, object, adverbial—may be still in doubt. The uncertain element is then queried in a focused way. Consider, for example, the following questions, where contrastive stress is used to mark the focused elements (Givón, 1993, pp. 247–248). Unlike unmarked *yes/no* questions, which are open with regard to overall expectation, a focused question places an indeterminate element in the focused position through the use of contrastive stress:

Did Megan play a practical joke on Pat? (or did *someone else*?)

Did Megan *play* a practical joke on Pat? (or only *plan* one?)

Did Megan play a *practical joke* on Pat? (or did she play *something else*, such as a trick?)

Did Megan play a practical joke *on Pat*? (or was it played *on someone else*?)

When an optional adverbial is present in the question, unless contrastive stress indicates otherwise, the adverbial automatically attracts and focuses attention in *yes/no* questions because of its final position in the clause. Thus, the following focused questions query the adverbial:

Did Megan play a trick on Pat *deliberately*? { (or was it an *accident*?)
(*or did she not do it?)

Did Megan play a trick on Pat *last Sunday*? { (or was it on *Monday*?)
(*or did she not do it?)

Did Megan play a trick on Pat *at the mall*? { (or was it *somewhere else*?)
(*or did she not do it?)

That the interrogative focus is attracted to optional constituents is further supported by the fact that when an optional adverbial is present, stressing the optional adverbial is natural. In contrast, stressing another constituent in the clause is odd:

Did Megan play a trick on Pat *deliberately*? (or was it an *accident*?)

?Did Megan play a trick on Pat *deliberately*? (or did someone else do it *deliberately*?)

STATEMENT-FORM QUESTIONS

Subject-operator inversion does *not* always take place. In fact, uninverted statement-form questions, marked simply with rising intonation, are common (Stivers, 2010). This type of question is marked in the sense that the speaker who poses the question is anticipating confirmation:

A: I just got back from San Francisco.

B: You had a good time there? (expecting confirmation)

B's reply with accompanying rising question intonation suggests that B's hunch was that the answer would be "Yes." Had B chosen instead to use the unmarked, neutral, inverted question, we might assume that B had no expectation about what A's reply would be:

A: I just got back from San Francisco.

B: Did you have a good time? (uncertain expectation)

In addition, a negative uninverted question could reflect the fact that new information has just been received that runs counter to an earlier expectation:

(Person A returns home early from a shopping trip)

B: The stores weren't open late? (counter to earlier expectation)

A's early return contradicts B's expectation that A would be shopping until later.

Weber (1989) and Williams (1989) both report that uninverted questions are much more common than one might suppose.⁴ In her analysis of face-to-face and telephone conversations, Weber found that as many as 41 percent of all the questions in the data were either uninverted, of the sort we have just considered, or nonclausal forms, such as the following (Weber, p. 181):

A: I've got so much work that I don't believe it, so I'm just not thinking about that.

B: In school, you mean?

In this nonclausal example, B questions with a prepositional phrase plus the clause tag *you mean*. Uninverted forms with rising intonation, with and without tags, serve as comprehension checks, as we see in this example (Williams, 1990).

In addition to comprehension checks, nonclausal questions often function as “next turn repair initiators” (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977, p. 367). In conversation analysis, *repair* refers to the efforts of participants to deal with trouble in hearing or understanding, and *next turn* indicates that the repair occurs in the conversational turn after the “trouble source” turn. Here is another example from Weber (1989, p. 170):

A: What's the dark green thing?

B: Pardon?

A: What's this?

B: That's Japanese eggplant.

In this example, B's production of *pardon*, a next turn repair initiator, displays some trouble with hearing or understanding A's entire question. A recasts her somewhat modified question. This time, its meaning is clear, and B responds to the question. Williams (1989) contributes evidence from her own investigation that full clausal uninverted questions also function as clarification requests.

One variation of a statement-form question is an *echo question*, which simply repeats, or modifies in some minor fashion, a previous utterance with rising intonation. If the intonation is rising, as it is for unmarked *yes/no* questions, then the purpose for using the echo question would simply be to seek confirmation of the preceding speaker's remark:

A: My sister is going out with Lou.

B: { Your sister is } going out with Lou? (seeking confirmation that the previous remark has been understood)
She's

If, on the other hand, the pitch of the intonation rises beyond the usual range, then the echo question can express counterexpectation—surprise or disbelief (see VanderBrook, Schlue, & Campbell, 1980, for further discussion):

B: Your sister is going out with Lou?

② ③ ④

SOME VERSUS ANY

The last point in our discussion of the meaning of *yes/no* questions has to do with the use of the determiners *some* and *any*, a contrast that we encountered in the previous chapter on negation. Many ESL/EFL grammar texts say that *any* is used in questions as well as negatives. This is true with regard to open or unmarked questions such as:

Do you have any paper I can borrow?

However, we also saw in the chapter on negation that the weakly stressed *some* suggests a positive quantity. It is, therefore, used in questions that in some way expect a positive answer, such as with an offer:

(A waiter to a customer in a restaurant)

A: Would you like some dessert? (to encourage the answer "Yes")

Just as we mentioned in our discussion with negatives, we must be cautious, therefore, about what we say about the distribution of *some* and *any*, as they can both occur with different question types, depending on the meaning⁵ (partly based on Chalker, 1984, p. 15):

Is there some news? (expecting the answer "Yes")

Is there any news? (open or neutral question)

Isn't there some news? (Surely there is.)

Isn't there any news? (I had hoped there would be.)

Is there no news?

Many of the issues that we have drawn attention to under the heading of meaning relate to *conducive questions* and words that go with them, questions and words that convey a questioner's expectation or preference for a given answer. One word of caution is in order here. When considering conduciveness, we are dealing with a context-based rather than an absolute notion (Piazza, 2002). As Piazza advises in her study of the pragmatics of such questions in academic discourse, to some extent the use of conducive questions can be accounted for by the asymmetrical power balance in classrooms, where it is customary for instructors to pose questions that have a preferred answer. The fact that we cannot regard the use of conducive questions as purely a semantic matter leads us to a discussion on the use of questions.

Issues of Use Concerning Yes/No Questions

Recall that with use, we are attempting to answer the question: when speakers have two or more question forms with the same meaning to choose from, which factors influence their choice—that is, why do they prefer one form over another?

THE USE OF SHORT ANSWERS

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the form of standard short answers in English (*Yes, it is./No, it isn't.*). While these short-answer forms are worth teaching ESL/EFL students, one should bear in mind that even these forms do not occur frequently as responses to *yes/no* questions. In Richards (1977), replies to *yes/no* questions containing auxiliary or verb repetition made up less than 20 percent of the written corpus and less than 10 percent of the

spoken English corpus. Similarly, in a discourse analysis of speech samples collected from a wide variety of contexts, Winn-Bell Olsen (1980) found that standard short forms were used rather infrequently by English speakers—in fact, only 8 percent of the time—as answers to *yes/no* questions in her data (26 out of 329 instances).

Winn-Bell Olsen (1980) discovered that speakers were much more likely to answer questions with a direct “Yes” (or its colloquial variants—e.g., *Yup, Yeah, Uh huh*) or a direct “No” (or its variants—e.g., *Nah, Nope, Uh uh, Not yet*), each often followed by some sort of expansion. Indirect affirmations, denials, or hedges (e.g., *Does it make you uncomfortable to talk about this problem? I guess maybe it does.*) accounted for a rather large percentage of the answers as well. Finally, a significant portion of the answers were formulaic sequences of confirmation or denial (e.g., *I doubt it.*). Since 23 out of 26 occurrences of standard short-form answers in her data were found in conversations between strangers or in self-conscious speech, Winn-Bell Olsen hypothesizes that the more distant the relationship between speakers or the more uncomfortable the situation, the more frequently speakers tend to use standard short-form answers.

STATEMENT-FORM YES/NO QUESTIONS

The use of uninverted statement-form *yes/no* questions might also be said to relate to issues of social familiarity or distance. Recall that uninverted questions are used when the speaker expects confirmation. Using an uninverted question thus suggests that the person asking the question knows the other person well enough to anticipate the other’s answer. Such intimacy often may not exist, and the use of uninverted questions could then appear to be presumptuous:

Worker to supervisor: You’re going to the dance?

ESL students have been known to use uninverted questions with their teachers,

You’re giving us a quiz on Thursday?

not realizing that their question can be seen to be presumptuous.

ELLIPTICAL QUESTIONS

At some point, teachers may want to teach their intermediate- and advanced-level students about informal *yes/no* questions that occur without an initial operator. Such questions are fairly frequent in informal conversations between speakers and are different from statement-form *yes/no* questions, in that they are used with no expectation or no particular expression of emotion:

(Are) You going to the movies?

(Has) She been feeling better?

(Do) You know Fred Callahan?

If *you* is the subject, it can also be deleted in most cases, along with the operator:

(Do you) Wanna study together?

In such questions, the operator and subject are optionally deletable because they are recoverable from other grammatical and lexical information in the question and from the discourse context. It would probably not be of high priority for your students to practice using such elliptical *yes/no* questions, but they should develop comprehension of this form and perhaps an ability to automatically supply the missing operator or operator and subject.

CONTRACTED VERSUS UNCONTRACTED NEGATIVES IN NEGATIVE QUESTIONS

In English negative *yes/no* questions, the negative may appear in both contracted and uncontracted forms. Only the contracted form, however, may appear sentence-initially as part of an operator:

Isn't it appropriate to ask?

Is it not appropriate to ask?

The question with the uncontracted negative after the subject is more formal than its counterpart with a question-initial contracted negative.

In a usage study, Kontra (1981) has documented the occurrence in contemporary English of uncontracted negative questions such as the following:

Is not linguistics a branch of psychology?

Here, the *not* appears before the subject in its uncontracted form. While such questions do occasionally occur, we view this type of question as a stylistically formal and somewhat archaic vestige of an earlier stage of English. Such a question, Kontra believes, is used when the speaker is inviting the listener to agree with the speaker's assumption that the expressed proposition is self-evidently true. One example he cites is the following excerpt from a discussion in the British Parliament (Kontra, 1993, p. 340):

Is not it an outrage that the Minister has not even tried to answer the question? . . .

Does not the Minister think that he has a duty to tell people the facts before they vote?

This word order would be unusual in North American English.

THE USE OF *AREN'T* AS A GAP-FILLER

A final note on contracted negative *yes/no* questions concerns the lexical gap that occurs in the first person singular. All of the following are acceptable contracted negative questions and short answers:

Isn't he/she/it?

He/she/it isn't.

Aren't we/you/they?

We/you/they aren't.

However, we cannot contract the verb *be* and the *not* in *I am not* unless we use the nonstandard *I ain't*. What speakers of English do in negative *yes/no* questions (but not in short answers) is to substitute *are* for *am* and contract. Thus:

Aren't I? { **I am not.**
 { **I'm not.**

This illogical gap-filler arose because there were strong social and educational stigmas against the use of *ain't*. *Aren't I?* is mainly a colloquialism, but it may puzzle ESL/EFL students when they encounter it; so you should be prepared to explain why sometimes *aren't* is used with the first person singular pronoun in negative *yes/no* questions.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Up to now, we have been dealing with questions whose function is primarily to seek new information or to clarify or confirm given or shared information. *Yes/no* questions can perform a number of other functions, of course. You have already seen in Chapter 8 how questions with modal forms can be used in requests for assistance:

Can I get a ride home with you? (direct request)

As we also saw in the chapter on modals, the past-tense form of *can* softens this a bit:

Could I get a ride home with you? (less direct)

An even more polite form of request uses an embedded question (about which we have more to say in Chapter 33):

I wonder if I could get a ride home with you. (least direct, therefore most polite)

You also saw in Chapter 8 how *yes/no* question forms could be used in making offers or invitations:

Would you like to sit for a while?

They can also be used as directives:

Would you please stand up straight?

as reprimands:

Aren't you a little old to be doing that?

as complaints:

Have you ever stayed home all day with a two-year-old?

and many other functions. Clearly, the function of a *yes/no* question is going to depend on the context and the speaker's intention, but it may also be clear why Heritage (2002) (see also Raymond, 2003) called questions "a form of social action" (p. 1427). Systemic functional linguistics, too, views questions as devices for expressing interpersonal meanings (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2008, p. 1217).

IN WRITTEN ACADEMIC TEXTS

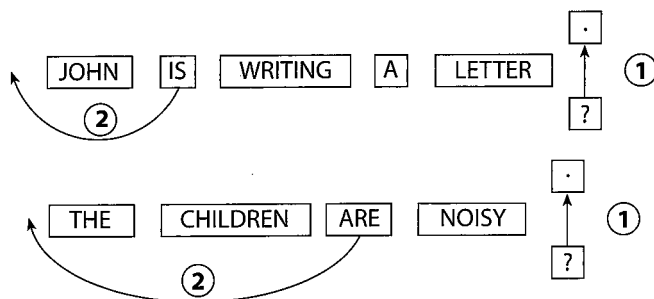
Of course, it is not just in oral discourse that students will encounter questions. According to Thompson (2001), questions in academic texts assign readers and writers roles. Typically, the questioner role is assigned to the reader, and the writer takes on the role of the answerer. Questions are designed to draw readers into a text and to manage the flow of information. Indeed, based on his corpus study, Hyland (2002) ascribes three functions to questions in textbooks: "to frame the discourse (signaling the issues to be dealt with), to organize the text (explicitly introducing new topics and often using metalanguage such as *question* or *topic*), and to set up claims (stimulating thought and anticipating an affirmation)" (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2008, p. 1218).

Conclusion

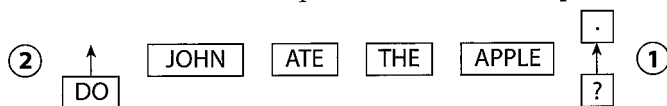
As we have indicated, a challenge for beginning ESL/EFL students is to learn about inversion in *yes/no* questions—both the syntactic rules and the social conditions in which they are appropriate. Because the *do* operator is not a morpheme with many equivalents in the languages of the world, its use in *yes/no* questions may require some special attention. Students may also need some understanding of how to respond to *yes/no* questions, particularly negative *yes/no* questions. Finally, we should remember that not all *yes/no* questions are inverted. As you have seen in this chapter, many conversational *yes/no* questions are uninverted, elliptical, or nonclausal in form. While you might not specifically teach ESL/EFL students to produce these forms, students may be confused, and you may need to help them comprehend their use.

Teaching Suggestions

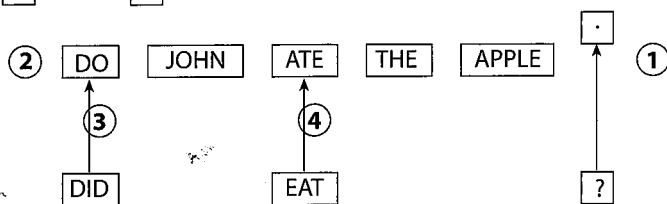
- Form.** To expose students to *yes/no* questions before they are asked to form them on their own, surveys can be used. Surveys in which students learn something about themselves and their classmates work well. Depending on the ages and backgrounds of your students, you can use various survey themes: for example, health habits (*Do you exercise?*), eating habits (*Do you eat rice for breakfast?*), or learning strategies (*Do you speak English with your friends?*). You can give students a survey form that you have prepared or they can create one with you. They then complete the survey themselves and ask the questions of one or more other students.
- Form.** To introduce inversion in sentences containing an auxiliary verb or *be*, you can show students a sentence with each word written out on a card. Then substitute a question-mark card for the period card and move the first auxiliary verb or *be* verb card to sentence-initial position.



Later, in order to introduce students to the formation of *yes/no* questions without an auxiliary verb or *be*, you will need to place a **DO** card at the front of a sentence after substituting a question mark card for the period card. For example:



Next, you can explain to students that the *do* verb carries the tense for the question. This can be demonstrated by replacing the **DO** card with **DID** and the **ATE** card with **EAT** after substituting the **?** for the **.** Thus:



Cards could also be used to show that the *do* carries the tense and person markings with the simple present tense:

- 1** JOHN EAT S APPLES .
- 2** Substitute **?** for the period at the end of the sentence and introduce **DO** to the front.
- 3** Show that the **S** of *eats* gets moved to the initial **DO** by moving the **S** from its position after **EATS** to a position following **DO**. Immediately replace **DO | S** with a new card **DOES** explaining that rewriting *do* plus third person singular present as *does* is a convention in English.

After several examples have been done, you might have volunteers come up and practice forming questions by moving and substituting the cards. To give students additional practice, prepare (or have students prepare) pieces of paper with the words, question marks, and morphemes for pairs of students to manipulate at their desks. These can be exchanged with other pairs for more practice.

3. **Form.** Guessing games can give students good practice in both asking and responding to meaningful questions.

a. For example, the game “Twenty Questions” provides an engaging way to practice forming and answering *yes/no* questions. The rules are simple. Someone thinks of an animal (including human beings), a vegetable (any living nonanimal), or a mineral (anything inanimate). The other players then can use up to 20 *yes/no* questions in an attempt to guess what the person is thinking of. If they can’t guess after using all 20 questions, the person wins.

A more concrete version for younger learners would be to have someone put an object in a paper bag, out of sight of the other players. They then get 20 *yes/no* questions to guess what is in the bag. For example:

Teacher: I have put something in this bag. Try to guess what it is, using questions that can be answered only with a *yes* or *no*.

Student 1: Is it round?

Teacher: Yes, it is.

Student 2: Is it hard?

Teacher: No, it isn’t.

Student 3: Is it a ball?

Teacher: No, it isn’t.

Student 4: Can we eat it?

Teacher: No, you can’t.

The person who guesses correctly can be the person to hide the next object. If students are in the early stages of learning to form *yes/no* questions, you may want to restrict the questions to those with modals and the *be* verb. Also, if they are beginners, they might need some help from you in accurately forming the questions they want to ask.

b. Another guessing game that encourages the use of *yes/no* questions is “What’s My Line?”, in which members of the class select occupations for themselves and the rest of the class must try to guess the occupation.

c. A similar game is one in which students play “Who Am I?”, where a class member pretends to be a well-known contemporary or historical figure. The other members of the class ask *yes/no* questions to guess the identity of the figure.

4. **Form.** Each student is given an assignment on a card. The assignment is to find someone in the class who is characterized by the particular trait written on the card. For example, one card might say, *Find someone who can play the drums*. Another might say, *Find someone who is a good cook*. Students must ask each other *yes/no* questions to find at least one person in the class for whom the trait is true.

5. **Form.** Getting students to ask each other questions about their backgrounds, academic majors, hobbies, favorite foods, and so on can be useful for practicing questions and helping students to get to know one another better. One of the techniques of the method “Suggestopedia” that encourages fluency is to have a student pose a question and then toss a large inflatable ball to another student. That student catches the ball, answers the question (if possible with a contraction), poses another question, and tosses the ball to a third student.

Student 1: Are you from Mexico? (tossing the ball to S2)

Student 2: (catching the ball) No, I’m not. I am from Guatemala.

Student 2: Do you study engineering? (tossing the ball to S3)

Student 3: (catching the ball) Yes, I do.

Student 3: Do you enjoy videogames? (tossing the ball to S4)

Student 4: (catching the ball) No, I don’t.

For students with a low level of proficiency in English, this same activity can be done in a chain-drill form, in which the same question is asked of and answered by every student in the room, one by one, thereby creating a chain; for example:

Student 1: Are you from Mexico?

Student 2: No. I’m not. I am from Guatemala.

Student 2: Are you from Vietnam?

Student 3: No, I’m not. I am from Laos.

Student 3: Are you from Morocco?

Student 4: Yes, I am.

Working on questions with third person subjects would also be valuable. You might teach some formulaic responses at the same time. For example:

Teacher: Is he from Mexico?

Student 1: I don’t know./I think so./I don’t think so.

6. **Form.** Sometimes reciting verse or poetry can be a pleasant way to practice the intonation and grammatical form of *yes/no* questions. Of course, the verse would have to be something that could be made comprehensible to students. Several of Christina Rossetti’s poems make repeated use of *yes/no* questions. They lend themselves to reading aloud in pairs or groups—one can ask the question, the other can answer it.
7. **Meaning.** To give students the necessary practice in asking and answering negative *yes/no* questions as native speakers of English do (responding to the presupposition, not the form), you can tell students a short story twice. During the second telling, change a few of the details. The students’ task is to listen to the story intently and, after you have told each version once, to use focused negative *yes/no* questions to ask about details in the second telling that did not coincide with the first. For instance:

(First story)

Teacher: A man walked out the front door and tripped over his son’s wagon. He scolded his son and told him to put the wagon in the garage. The boy did this. A while later, the man went into the garage and tripped over his son’s wagon again.

(Second story)

Teacher: A man walked out the back door and tipped over his son’s bicycle. He scolded his son and told him to put the bicycle in the shed. The boy did this. A week later, the man went into the shed and tipped over his son’s bicycle again.

Student 1: Wasn't it the *front* door?

Teacher: Yes, it was.

Student 2: Wasn't it a *wagon*?

Teacher: Yes, it was.

Student 3: Didn't the father *trip* over the wagon?

Teacher: Yes, he did.

Student 4: Wasn't it a *day* later?

Teacher: No, it wasn't.

Students will need to make up and tell their own versions of two stories to receive practice in answering the focused negative *yes/no* questions of their classmates.

8. **Use.** To give students practice in using *yes/no* questions in making polite requests, have students write down five requests they would like to make. They should each then make the request of another student in the class. The second student should agree to comply with the request only if it is in a polite form. For example:

Student 1: Hey, Pablo, can I have some scrap paper?

Student 2: Sorry. No.

Student 1: Pablo, could I borrow some scrap paper, please?

Student 2: Sure. Here's some.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide original example sentences that illustrate the following concepts:
 - a. unmarked *yes/no* question
 - b. negative *yes/no* question
 - c. *some* in a *yes/no* question
 - d. uncontracted negative *yes/no* question
 - e. *yes/no* question with *do*
 - f. statement-form question
 - g. focused *yes/no* question
 - h. standard short-form answer
 - i. formulaic short answer
 - j. *yes/no* question with phrasal modal and *do*
 - k. echo question (showing surprise)
 - l. elliptical *yes/no* question
2. Draw the trees and arrows for the following questions:
 - a. Was she in class on Friday?
 - b. Did he write the letter?
 - c. Will her brother come to the party?
 - d. Have you been living in Tampa?
3. What rules have been violated as the following questions were formed?
 - a. *Do she went?
 - b. *Could have he gone?
 - c. *Runs he fast?
 - d. *Do they be happy?
4. What do negation and *yes/no* question formation have in common?

Test your ability to apply what you know.

5. An ESL/EFL student has said one of the following. You can understand the meaning they intend. What guidance could you give concerning the form?

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| a. *Saw you the movie? | c. *Is not she intelligent? |
| b. *Did you threw the ball? | d. A: Do you like ice cream? B: *Yes, I like. |

6. We have chosen to place the chapter on negation before this chapter on yes/no question formation. Some ESL/EFL student materials do not do this. What are some arguments for teaching them in the order that we do here? Also, brainstorm ways to get students to ask questions. It is not as easy to do because it is usually teachers who do the asking.

7. You have a student who never inverts yes/no questions but simply uses an uninverted question with question intonation. When you tell him that he should invert, he replies that he often hears native speakers use uninverted questions. What would you say to this student?

8. An old joke arises from the fact that yes/no questions can serve more than one function. A wants to know the time and sees that B is wearing a wristwatch.

A: Do you have a watch?

B: Yes. (and keeps on walking)

Explain the misunderstanding.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For discussion of interrogatives in other languages, see:

Saddock, J. (2012). Formal features of questions. In J. P. de Ruiter (Ed.), *Questions: Formal, functional, and interactional perspectives* (pp. 103–123). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

For a discussion of whether subject-auxiliary inversion is purely a form-based rule or is instead motivated by semantic or pragmatic factors, see:

Borsley, R. D., & Newmeyer, F. (2009). On subject-auxiliary inversion and the notion “purely formal generalization.” *Cognitive Linguistics*, 20(1), 135–143

Goldberg, A. (2006). *Constructions at work: The nature of generalization in language*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Goldberg, A., & Del Giudice, A. (2005). Subject-auxiliary inversion: A natural category. *Linguistics Review*, 2(4), 411–428.

For a functional classification of questions, see:

Tsui, A. (1992). A functional description of questions. In M. Coulthard (Ed.), *Advances in spoken discourse analysis* (pp. 89–110). London, England: Routledge.

For pedagogical activities, see:

Firsten, R. (2008). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 2*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

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Endnotes

1. However, there are many other ways to answer a *yes/no* question. See, for example, Heritage and Raymond (2012).
2. It can be done, though, in British English with the main verb *have*, as in *Have you the time?* and in some lexicalized sentence stems in American English, such as *Have you any idea . . . ?*
3. It should be acknowledged that there is no *unique* question intonation, although some tones may be more common in questions than others (Cruttenden, 1986, p. 59).
4. Of the 637 questions in Weber’s data, 108 were uninverted forms and 153 were nonclausal forms.
5. We single out *some* and *any* as determiners in this section in order to correct a misapprehension about *some* being used only in statements and *any* only in questions. The same point that we are making here applies also to related forms; e.g., in pronouns (*Has anybody/somebody seen the keys?*) and in adverbs (*Are you going anywhere/somewhere?*). Indeed, Heritage, Robinson, Elliott, Beckett, and Wilkes (2007) report that patients are more likely to report their health concerns when medical practitioners ask them, “Is there something else you would like to address in the visit today?” than if *something* is replaced by *anything*.

Introduction

In Chapter 2, we introduced the three main moods for English sentences: declarative (sometimes called *indicative*), interrogative, and imperative. In Chapter 5, we examined the basic word order of declarative sentences, and in Chapter 11, we did the same for *yes/no* questions, one form associated with the interrogative mood. Obviously, there is a great deal more to say about these two main sentence moods; however, before we do this, it is time to introduce the final main sentence mood—the imperative. In Chapter 2, we also made the point that there are a number of syntactic ways that the communicative function of “getting someone to do something” can be accomplished; nevertheless, the sentence type that is normally associated with the imperative mood is the command:

Sign here. Take a seat.

Although not all languages have separate imperative types for commands (Aikhenvald, 2010), those languages in the world that do, tend to display a number of common properties (Jary & Kissine, 2014). For instance, all languages allow null or zero subjects in imperatives (Mauck & Zanuttini, 2005).

Indeed, when we examine imperatives in English, we are struck by the fact that there is no obvious (overt) subject noun phrase. While it is not impossible for imperatives to have subjects, as we will see later in this chapter, sentences without subjects would seem to be in violation of one of our fundamental phrase structure rules, which indicates that every English sentence must have both a subject (i.e., an NP) and a predicate.

Another idiosyncrasy of imperatives is that they are tenseless and take no modals. Notice that to capture this fact, our phrase structure rule for the auxiliary offers a choice between tense/modal and -imper:

$$\text{AUX} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \{ \text{T} \\ \text{M} \} \\ \text{-imper} \end{array} \quad (\text{pm}) \text{ (-perf) (-prog)} \right\}$$

This rule also indicates that -imper occurs with no pm, -perf, or -prog. While this is true for the most part, it is possible, though not common, to have an imperative with progressive aspect:

Be watching tomorrow night for the conclusion to the show.

We must also address the question, “When is it appropriate to use imperatives in English?” The traditional answer to this question, offered in many ESL/EFL texts, is that

imperatives are used when there is a status difference between the speaker and listener such that the speaker has the power to order or command the listener to do something. For example, the military officer is often portrayed as “barking commands” at service personnel of lesser rank, using imperatives such as “Listen up!”

Given our attempt in this teacher’s course to be comprehensive, we intend to show that the status difference between speaker and listener is not the primary factor that determines when imperatives are used. The late rock idol Elvis Presley’s plea “Love me tender” seems a far cry from a military bark; nonetheless, his plea and the military order above share a common syntactic form. Sociolinguistic factors and corpus linguistic results governing the meaning and use of imperatives are investigated, following our analysis of their form.

The Form of Imperatives

You have just seen how the fact that most imperatives are subjectless presents us with a dilemma as far as our phrase structure rule for a sentence goes. Of course, we could modify our phrase structure rule for a sentence by putting parentheses around the SUBJ, thus signifying its optionality. However, our intuition tells us that a subject actually does underlie imperative sentences; it’s just that it does not usually get expressed.

Traditional grammarians have referred to the underlying subject of imperative sentences as the “understood *you*.” In other words, the subject of an unmarked form of an imperative is the second person singular or plural subject pronoun, *you*:

(You) listen up!

While such an explanation is intuitively satisfying, we can go even further and use syntactic evidence to corroborate the traditional grammarians’ assertion that an understood *you* is the subject of an imperative. Although we do not fully examine reflexive pronouns until Chapter 16, suffice it to say here that the object of a reflexive verb must be identical in reference to the subject of the same sentence; that is, in the following sentence, *Ann* and the reflexive pronoun *herself* are co-referential—they refer to the same person:

Ann prided herself on her accomplishments.

Now notice the form of the reflexive pronoun when it occurs in object position in an imperative:

Watch yourself! Watch yourselves!

Thus, this syntactic evidence supports our intuition that the subject of imperative sentences is *you*. Mauck and Zanuttini (2005) broaden the subject category a bit by stating that subjects of English imperatives refer to an addressee or *a group containing the addressee*, a point to which we return later in this chapter.

Recall also that our phrase structure rule draws a sharp distinction between imperative and nonimperative sentences based on the contention that imperative sentences are “tenseless.” The strongest evidence in favor of this analysis are those imperatives formed with the copula *be*:

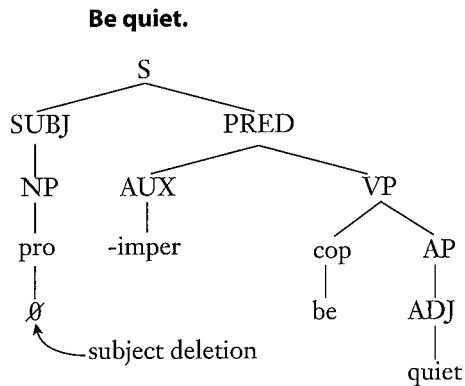
You be quiet! Be on time!

If these sentences had a “present tense” instead of an -imper auxiliary in their basic structure, we would expect to find the second person form of the copula *be*:

***Are quiet.**

Since such strings do not occur as imperatives, we can assume that imperatives do not contain a tensed auxiliary. Most do not have an overt subject either, but since some do, we will posit

“you” as the subject of imperative sentences, which in most cases, gets deleted. Here is the tree for *Be quiet*.



The copula *be* used in affirmative imperatives is not really stative because here, it means something like “become” (e.g., *Be strong.*) or “act like” (e.g., *Be a dear and get me something to drink.*). We cannot use copula *be* with its stative meaning in imperatives (e.g., **Be thin.*). Other normally stative verbs can be used in the imperative mood when they have a more dynamic meaning and when the subject can be seen to be an agent of the action, such as *Love it or leave it* or when they are in the negative: “Don’t believe that pack of lies” (Bolinger, 1977, p. 166).

NEGATIVE IMPERATIVES

With Do

Negative imperatives are somewhat more complicated than their affirmative counterparts. Three types of negative imperatives occur:

1. **Don’t you run!** (contracted negative; subject present)
2. **Don’t run!** (contracted negative; subject absent)
3. **Do not run!** (uncontracted negative; subject absent)

A fourth combination, with an uncontracted negative and subject present, does not occur:

4. ***Do {not you / you not} run!**

With Be

In a departure from our earlier observation in the chapter on negatives, and again in the one on *yes/no* questions, we note here that, in contrast, imperatives with *be* require the addition of the operator *do*:

1. **Don’t you be late!**
2. **Don’t be late!**
3. **Do not be late!**
4. ***Do {not you / you not} be late.**

A final observation is that it is also possible to produce a negative imperative by using the preverbal adverb of frequency, “never,” in initial position without the *do* verb:

Never be late again! (Don't you ever be late again!)

THE SUBJECT OF IMPERATIVES: ITS RETENTION AND ITS DELETION

Earlier in this chapter, we made the case for imperatives having second person subjects; that is, the command is directed at some “you” the speaker is addressing.¹ Here, we want to be specific about when to use *you* in English imperatives—and when not to.

As you have seen, when we use an imperative without a subject, we might be addressing one or more persons. If we want to make it clear that we are speaking to someone in particular, we can add an unstressed *you* (e.g., *You take care.*). For the same reason, *you* is also often retained when one is giving instructions to a particular child and wants to be explicit, such as saying, “You come here” (with a gesture to indicate which child). To further reduce ambiguity, a vocative (the addressee’s name in this example) can also be used before the imperative, such as, “Mr. Holmes, you sit over there.” Notice that *you* is still the subject of this imperative, with *Mr. Holmes* having the distinctive rising-falling intonation of English vocatives. It is also possible to move the vocative to the end of the sentence, “You sit over there, Mr. Holmes.” Unlike these other examples, if the *you* subject is being stressed, annoyance is conveyed; for example: “*You* cut that out!”

Related to the issue of addressee is a special kind of imperative called the *diffuse imperative*. Diffuse imperatives are directed at anyone and everyone who is present:

Somebody open the door. (somebody = one of you here)

Don't anybody leave! (not + anybody = none of you here)

Note that diffuse imperatives would be inappropriate if two people were conversing. A lone speaker, however, who is addressing an imaginary or wished-for audience can use a diffuse imperative (e.g., *Somebody help me!*). Note that diffuse imperatives are different from more specific imperatives that begin with a vocative, which gives the name of the person being addressed:

Mac, open the door.

In such cases, *you* can also occur, as we have just seen:

Mac, you open the door.

However, this cannot be done with diffuse imperatives because their subjects are indefinite third person pronouns, not the definite second person pronoun:

***Somebody, you open the door.**

ELLIPTICAL IMPERATIVES

As in other constructions that you have seen, imperatives can be used in truncated fashion in normal conversational interaction. Kuehn (1993) reported the following for three hours of transcribed conversation among employees and between the supervisor and employees in a dishwashing room of a small-town college: of the 25 imperatives that occurred, fewer than half (11) were in their full form. For the 14 others, verbs or objects were deleted. Deletion was especially prevalent where an object was being held or something was being demonstrated.

Kuehn (1993) offers the following examples:

Trays! (Put your trays on the conveyor belt.)

These two. (Put these two trays together.)

Switch! (Switch garbage disposal covers with me.)

As Kuehn points out, for workers in a noisy work environment with a fairly standard work routine, even elliptical imperatives with such deletions would be quite clear.

The Meaning of the Imperative

Using a cognitive linguistics approach, Takahashi (2012) proposes a schema that accounts for the English imperative. In cognitive linguistics, a schema is an abstraction that is compatible with all instances of the category it defines. Takahashi suggests for the English imperative, the schema is very abstract: hypotheticality, second person subject, non-past, and a varying degree of force exertion. The hypotheticality is especially evident in this example that Takahashi cites from a newspaper article discussing the previous day's baseball game (p. 3):

Put Randy Johnson on the mound, give him nine runs, and the Arizona Diamondbacks become about as unbeatable as a team can get. (*International Herald Tribune*, April 25, 2001)

In other words, the writer is not suggesting that this really be undertaken. The writer is being hypothetical. As for the force exertion part of the schema, the degree of force is calculated and interpreted in a particular context. According to Takahashi, only prototypical imperatives manifest a high degree of force toward the addressee. In some cases, the directive force is mild to say the least, e.g., answering someone's request for directions. In other cases, imperatives communicate just the opposite of a directive (*Go ahead. Throw it. I dare you.*—said to someone holding a snowball). And, in still others, the conditional imperatives (e.g., *Do that and you will be in trouble*), it is clearly the case that the imperative can also evoke non-directive meaning.

VERBS IN IMPERATIVE SENTENCES

Continuing along this same line of thought, we note that many of the verbs frequently used in imperative sentences manifest a low degree of force exertion. In their study of verbs used in imperative sentences in the ICE-GB corpus (the British component of the International Corpus of English), Stefanowitsch and Gries (2003) found that there were certain verbs that were most often used in imperatives. The five most common verbs were *let*, *see*, *look*, *listen*, and *worry*, with *worry* appearing exclusively in the negative, i.e., *Don't worry*. A consideration of the semantics of these five verbs suggests that the imperative may be less often used to direct others to do something for the sake of the speaker and more often as advice given by the speaker to benefit the listener, or as Stefanowitsch and Gries put it, to ensure the future cooperation and interaction of the speaker and listener (p. 233). Adding to this observation, the list of verbs that Takahashi (2012) compiled overlaps somewhat with that of Stefanowitsch and Gries. Takahashi extracted verbs from a corpus of American fiction and found that the following verbs were most frequent: *let's*, *tell*, *let*, and *look*. In order of frequency, these were followed by: *come*, *get*, *take*, *be*, *go*, *give*, *do*, *forget*, *listen*, *wait*, and *make*. Given the prevalence of *let's* and *let*, we turn to consider these verbs next.

LET'S

In addition to the imperatives discussed previously, grammarians describe an *inclusive imperative*, an imperative that includes the speaker with the addressee(s):

Let's be quiet now.

Collins (2004) cites Ervin-Tripp's (1976) observation that inclusive *let*-imperatives seem to adopt a less authoritarian tone than an ordinary imperative, thereby reducing the latter's face-threatening nature:

Let's be quiet. (cf. Be quiet.)

Examining almost 10 million spoken and written words of British, American, Indian, New Zealand, and Australian English, Collins reports that the inclusive *let*-imperatives exhibit a number of distinctive grammatical properties, compared with ordinary imperatives:

- They can be negated in two ways, without any apparent difference in scope:²

Let's not go. Let's don't go.

- Unlike ordinary imperatives that take the tags *will you* or *won't you*, they take *shall we* as a tag:

Let's think about the present, shall we? (LLC S10.1, 707)

- *Let us* is almost always contracted as *let's* (97 percent in speech; over 60 percent in writing).

Collins (2004) identifies another type of imperative with *let*, which he calls *open let-imperatives* person (accounting for 83.6 percent of tokens):

But let it be clearly understood, the secret is inviolable. (ACE R02, 321)

In this case, the proposition expressed by open *let*-imperatives defines a situation or event which the speaker simply hopes for or presents as desirable or necessary.

Of these two special *let*-imperative constructions, inclusives are more than six times as frequent as the open type. Furthermore, the former's register distribution is very different, with the inclusive construction more than three times as frequent in speech as in writing, and the open construction more than three times more often in writing.

Collins (2004) identifies several functions of these two *let*-imperatives and ordinary imperatives with *let*.

Expository Directives. These are typically used to guide the reader through an argument. Presumably, they reduce the authoritarian tone of the imperative without *let*:

But let me remind you again how much more different things were in Russia. (LOB J68, 85)

Remember again how much more different things were in Russia.

The expository directive use was particularly common with inclusive *let*-imperatives with uncontracted *us*, accounting for 61.4 percent of all tokens in the written corpora:

Now let us consider a few relatively common predators. (WC E04, 207)

Fiat. In this category, *let* acts as a full lexical verb with the meaning of "allow"; i.e., an "ordinary imperative" in Collins's taxonomy:

Let A denote the operator on L2 with domain D (A) and action. (ACE J21, 4887)

Collins refers to Swales, Ahmad, Chang, Chavez, and Seymour's (1998) summary: "such imperatives are used to formulate hypotheses, to begin the establishment of a model, to start the definition of a process, or to begin the statement of a theorem" (Swales et al., 1998, p. 106).

In Collins's study, they accounted for 84/414, or 20.3 percent, of all ordinary imperatives with *let* in the written corpora, occurring dominantly in the learned/scientific category (80/84, or 95.2 percent).

Hedges. A tactic used to buy the speaker more time to think:

um (coughs) now let me see—well I'm quite fond of Durrell (LLC S3.1, 177)

In the spoken corpora, this use accounted for 49/348, or 14 percent, of all ordinary imperatives with *let*.

Comparing frequencies among the corpora, Collins (2004) found inclusive *let*'s to be used most often in American writing and least in Indian, with British, Australian, and New Zealand writing between the two extremes. On the other hand, open *let*-imperatives have been in decline in written English in recent decades, with the sharpest decline occurring in American English.

Collins (2004) attributes some of these changes to the linguistic process known as *bleaching*—in which a word begins to lose its semantic meaning and take on more of a grammatical role. In other words, in contrast to ordinary imperatives with *let* where *let* means “allow,” the *let* in the other two imperatives mark either collaborative activity (inclusive *let*) or a wish (open *let*).

IMPERATIVE + DECLARATIVE CONSTRUCTION

Scontras and Gibson (2011) discuss a special imperative construction that consists of an imperative clause followed by a declarative clause marked for the future, with the two clauses joined in a single sentence with *and*:

Study hard, and you will pass the class.

It is also possible to have such a conjoined sentence with no imperative meaning:

Ignore your homework, and you will fail the class.

Assuming that failing a class is an undesirable outcome, the second statement cannot be construed as a command to ignore homework. Instead, its meaning is that of a basic conditional: *If you ignore your homework, you will fail the class.*

The two constructions, one with the meaning of an imperative and the other with that of a conditional, behave differently. Scontras and Gibson (2011) recommend treating them as grammatically distinctive or giving a pragmatic account of their differences.

The Use of Imperatives

FORM AND FUNCTION

At the risk of redundancy, we once again acknowledge that the form and function link between imperatives and directives is not categorical—that is, one can command or, less forcefully, request without using an imperative form:

Imperative: **Help me, please.**

Declarative: **I need some help. I wonder if you could help me out.**

Interrogative: **Could/Can you give me a hand?**

According to Takahashi (2012), the choice among these forms depends on the balance between cost and obligation. Imperatives tend to be avoided if the cost to the addressee is perceived to be too great or if the addressee is not obligated to comply (p. 11). Conversely,

the following list illustrates some of the functions in addition to commands that imperatives can be used for, depending on the situational context:

Offers: **Have another biscuit.**

Suggestions: **Let's go to a movie tonight.**

Requests: **Close the door, please.**

Advice: **Don't forget Mother's Day.**

Directions: **Go left at the next corner.**

Prohibitions: **Do not pick the flowers.**

Warnings: **Watch out!**

Procedures: **Add a teaspoon of baking powder to the flour.**

Invitations: **Come in.**

Threats: **Don't push your luck.**

Wishes: **Have a great day!**

POLITENESS AND THE USE OF THE IMPERATIVES

With regard to the imperative mood, what advice might we be able to give ESL/EFL students on when to use imperative sentences to give commands or to make requests and when to use other forms? Carrell and Konneker (1981) found considerable agreement among speakers and learners of English as to which forms were considered the most polite in making requests. The forms varied among three dimensions: sentence mood (declarative, interrogative, and imperative), presence or absence of a modal, and the tense used. Here is their hierarchy of politeness, around which there was considerable native-speaker/nonnative-speaker consensus:

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| ↑ ↓ | Least Polite (most direct) | Imperative—elliptical | A glass of water. |
| | | Imperative | Give me a glass of water. |
| | | Declarative—no modal (<i>want/need</i>) | I want a glass of water. |
| | | Declarative—historically present tense modal ³ | I'll have a glass of water. |
| | | Declarative—historically past tense modal | I'd like a glass of water. |
| | | Interrogative—no modal | Do you have a glass of water? |
| | | Interrogative—historically present tense modal | Can you give me a glass of water? |
| Most Polite (least direct) | Interrogative—historically past tense modal | Could you give me a glass of water? | |

According to the subjects in Carrell and Konneker's (1981) study, sentence mood contributes the most to the order of the politeness hierarchy: interrogative—most polite; declarative—next most polite; imperative—least polite. Presence of modals contributes next to politeness: modals don't add much to the politeness of the already-very-polite interrogative, but they do contribute more to the politeness of the not-as-polite declarative. Finally, if the modal is in historically past tense, this adds a small additional degree of politeness.

Increasing the Politeness

While Carrell and Konnecker (1981) did not explicitly examine the politeness contribution of *please*, it could be noted that the effect of adding *please* to an imperative does contribute to its being more polite. Compare, for example,

Give me a glass of water.

to

Please give me a glass of water. or Give me a glass of water, please.

Notice that if there is a *you* subject, the addition of *please* seems odd:

***Please you give me a glass of water.**

?You please give me a glass of water.

?You give me a glass of water, please.

Kindly can also be used to make an imperative more polite:

Kindly hand me the flashlight.

Another way to enhance the politeness of imperatives when they are used as offers, wishes, or invitations is to use the *do* auxiliary verb, which makes the wish or offer more emphatic:

Have a good time.

Come in.

Do have a good time.

Do come in.

In contrast to polite imperatives with *please*, imperatives with *just* add affect that can be used with negative [as in *Just (you) wait and see.*], or positive (as in *Just be patient; everything will work out.*) imperatives.

On Politeness and Rudeness

To provide some balance here, we must also acknowledge that although we want to help our students to be as polite in English as they want to be, we do not want to give ESL/EFL students the impression that they should *always* opt for the most polite form possible. Beebe (1996), for instance, advises teaching students how to be rude so that they can deal with people appropriately when the situation calls for it—for instance, when they feel they are being taken advantage of. Moreover, undue politeness can have a distancing effect of its own. However, as Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2008) have argued, given the face-threatening nature of imperatives, it remains crucial to teach ESL/EFL students pragmatic norms as well as appropriate mitigating devices when they use imperatives. Again, as we mentioned in Chapter 1, whether the students use these depends on them.

We are not teaching conformity to uniformity—as if this were even possible—but we do think that students should have information on which to base their decisions concerning language use. Perhaps the rule of thumb here should be the principle that Ervin-Tripp (1982) laid out with respect to the use of imperatives. It is not so much that a power differential between speaker and listener conditions the use of an imperative; it is more the case that imperatives are used when “cooperation is assumed.” For example, it can be assumed that a private in the army will cooperate with an officer; accordingly, an imperative is appropriate. If the cooperation of one’s peers can be assumed, imperatives are also appropriate. For instance, telling someone to “Pass the catsup” at the dinner table is perfectly acceptable because there is no reason to assume lack of cooperation. Of course, the use of *please* is almost always appropriate (as parents are forever telling their children). To cite another example, when giving a warning (such as *Watch out!*), cooperation can certainly be assumed. Most people would prefer to receive such a warning in the shortest possible form, rather than a longer one with all the politeness markers intact!

THE USE OF IMPERATIVES IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Academic writing involves persuasion, which is often accomplished with the use of directives. As we observed earlier, directives do not only take the form of imperatives. They can be declarative statements with modals such as *should* and *must*. In addition, they can be constructed with copula + predicative adjective (e.g., *It is essential*). They all are used by writers to direct their readers to participate in the text in some way or perform some action outside it.

Hyland (2002) analyzed directives in a 2.5-million-word corpus of published articles, textbooks, and L2 student essays. He identified three functions of directives:

- Direct readers to some part of the text:
Refer to example 2.
- Instruct readers to perform a physical act:
Set the sliding amplitude at 30 mm traveling distance.
- Steer readers to certain cognitive acts (e.g., lead them through a line of reasoning):
Consider the Achilles paradox. (article on philosophy)
Note that B is dimensionless... (Mechanical engineering textbook)

By far, the most frequent in the textbook and research article categories, according to Hyland's (2002) analysis, were instances of the last one, from the cognitive category. It is also noteworthy that the directives in the textbooks were often less imposing, using the inclusive imperatives *we will* and *let's* or *let us*:

Now, we'll look at some ways that retailing has changed. (Marketing textbook)

Let us multiply both sides of the equation by the Planck constant. (Physics textbook)

A further observation that Hyland (2002) made is that the use of directives differed across disciplines and genres somewhat. For instance, in the "hard sciences" (e.g., physics), readers are positioned through the use of directives to some cognitive act, using, for example, *suppose*, *consider*, and *note*. Hyland attributes their use to the need for precision, tight space constraints, and highly formalized argument structures, characteristics of the physical sciences, offering scientists an economical way to cut to the heart of the matter (Swales et al., 1998). The soft disciplines tended to use directives more for textual reference, although biology, a hard science, also did this to a considerable extent. A study of term papers written by university students also found a disciplinary bias, with students' use of imperatives mirroring that of the journal articles and research monographs in the respective disciplines (Neiderhiser, Kelley, Kennedy, Swales, & Vergaro, 2014).

Conclusion

Except for negative imperatives, the form of imperatives is perhaps less challenging than for other moods because students need not concern themselves about typical verb morphology problems such as tense/aspect and subject-verb agreement. Nevertheless, the subtle distinctions among English imperatives suggest that students need guidance in using the forms appropriately. Giving students help with understanding commands might be important as well. Considering the variety of forms that are used to give a command, it is not surprising that learners might not always understand them. Kuehn (1993) cites the example of the nonnative speaker of English who did not recognize "Can you take this and load it?" as a command from his supervisor, to which the nonnative replied that he didn't know how. While the worker was no doubt speaking honestly, Kuehn notes that the supervisor's question was

not really a question, as this young and inexperienced employee seemed to think it was, nor was it a polite request, as demonstrated by the fact that the supervisor next said, “Better learn!”

Regarding use, helping students be as polite as they want to be without appearing obsequious or standoffish is no easy feat. Whatever help ESL/EFL teachers can provide their students will be valuable, whether in the form of direct instruction or feedback on their performance.

Teaching Suggestions

- 1. Form.** Asher (2009) has developed a methodology for teaching a second language that he calls “Total Physical Response.” Within this methodology, the second language learner carries out commands issued solely in imperative form in the target language by the teacher. By gradually building up a repertoire of such constructions, the learner is increasingly able to respond appropriately. We find that when students act out commands as a first step in learning imperatives, it helps them associate the construction with an action. Commands such as “Stand up,” “Turn around,” “Turn left,” “Turn right,” “Point to the board,” “Sit down,” and so on could be taught from the very earliest days of instruction. Later, to get practice in production, students can give commands with which the teacher and the other students are asked to comply.
- 2. Form.** For practice in using both affirmative and negative imperatives, the class can play a modified version of the children’s game “Simon Says,” in which students have to do whatever is commanded unless the negative is present (note that the pace must be quick in order to make this a bit of a challenge). Here’s an example:
 - Teacher:** Simon says, “Stand up.” (Students stand up.)
 - Teacher:** Simon says, “Turn around.” (Students turn around.)
 - Teacher:** Simon says, “Don’t sit down.”

Anyone who sits down after this third command is eliminated from the game, which continues until the class has one or two “winners” remaining.

This game can also give students practice in forming negative imperatives. After students become more proficient in forming negatives, students can lead this modified version of “Simon Says.”
- 3. Meaning.** To practice comprehension and then production of imperatives, the teacher can ask students to follow certain procedures; later, students direct similar procedures. The following exemplifies steps in an “operation” (a sequence of steps involving a tool or device):
 - The teacher models a chain of commands and accompanying actions that perform an operation. For example, an operation might be to use an ATM: “Insert your debit card into the ATM; enter your PIN; select your language; enter the amount of money you want; take your money; take your card; don’t forget the receipt.”
 - The teacher repeats the operation once again, pantomiming the steps and giving the commands.
 - Students then perform the operation in response to commands from the teacher.
 - Students give the directions to the teacher.
 - Students give the directions to each other.
- 4. Use.** As we have pointed out in this chapter, students will need to learn when a request is being made of them. This is particularly challenging when the syntactic form of the

request seems to suggest that some other function is being communicated. To begin to address this challenge, teachers might read a list of sentences (including interrogatives and imperatives) to their students. After each one, students should respond not to the *form* but to the *function* of the sentence. For example:

Teacher: Felipe, do you have a pen I can use?

Felipe should learn, of course, that this is a request to borrow a pen, not a request for information. Thus, in this exercise, he should offer a pen to the teacher.

Teacher: Miguel, how do you like the weather here in Winnipeg?

Miguel needs to recognize that this is a request for information and respond accordingly—"It's cold."

Teacher: Somebody, turn off the lights.

Here, everyone should attempt to comply—or at least those sitting near the light switches.

Teacher: Phiang, should you be chewing gum in class?

Phiang needs to know to take the gum out of his mouth.

5. **Use.** To give students practice with polite commands, ask students to pair up, and give each member of each pair a task that he or she will ask the other member of the pair to do. Also assign each a role. For example, in the first pair, A is told that B is her friend and that she wants B to help her with her homework. B is told that she is A's friend and that she would like A to give her a ride home after school.

The pair of students then role-play this simple interaction. Students are told to agree to the other's request only when they are satisfied that the other has been sufficiently polite. For example:

A: Help me with my homework, please.

B: Sorry. I can't.

A: I need some help with my homework.

B: Sorry. I can't.

A: Could you please help me with my homework?

B: All right/Okay/No problem/Certainly/Of course.

Notice that this sort of exercise also gives students practice in responding to the requests that others make.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide original example sentences that illustrate the following concepts. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples.

a. imperative

(i.) affirmative

(ii.) negative

b. inclusive *let*-imperative

c. diffuse imperative

d. *let*-imperative as an expository directive

e. elliptical imperative

f. *you* retention

g. imperative with *please*

h. emphatic *do* to add politeness

2. Draw tree diagrams for the following imperatives:
 - a. Take a break.
 - b. Mix the dry ingredients in a bowl.
3. Why are the following sentences ungrammatical?
 - a. *She go away.
 - b. *Don't angry.
 - c. *Leaves the room.
 - d. *Do not you take offense.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

4. Review the syntactic arguments for claiming that imperatives are tenseless. Do likewise for the syntactic arguments that underlying imperatives has an understood you. See if you can explain these arguments in your own words.
5. As you saw in the chapter on yes/no questions and as Schaffer (1993) points out, a number of different types of sentences in colloquial, spoken English are subjectless, such as the following:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Nice day. | (It's a nice day.) |
| Going to the party? | (Are you going to the party?) |
| Got too much work to do. | (I've got too much work to do.) |

What is the difference between these subjectless sentences and the subjectlessness of the imperative in English?

6. Sometimes ESL/EFL teachers have difficulty convincing students to use imperatives because the students believe that they are rude. What would you do to convince your students that imperatives are often appropriate?
7. We have discussed a number of ways through which imperatives can be made more polite. List those that we have already mentioned, and then see if you can add any more.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For comparative language information with regards to imperatives, see:

- Aikhenvald, A. Y. (2010). *Imperatives and commands*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Jary, M., & Kissine, M. (2014). *Imperatives*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaufman, M. (2012). *Interpreting imperatives*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

For additional ideas on using “operations” to practice imperatives, see:

- Nelson, G., Winters, T., & Clark, R. (2004). *Do as I say. Operations, procedures, and rituals for language acquisition*. Brattleboro, VT: Pro Lingua.

For classroom exercises on recognizing appropriate commands and requests, see:

- Badalamenti, V., & Henner-Stanchina, C. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 1* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
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Endnotes

1. There are, however, several other possible addressees for imperatives (see Zanuttini, 2008).
2. Compare these with ordinary imperatives using *let* as a lexical verb (e.g., *Don’t let them vote* and *Let them not vote*), where the scope and the meaning of the negative is different.
3. Carrell and Konnecker did not test for any distinction among the modal verbs themselves since the hierarchy was based on syntactic rather than semantic markers. For the same reason, the use of *please* and other lexical distinctions were also omitted from the hierarchy.

Introduction

Wh-questions are important constructions to learn. They are used to request specific information, so the need to use them arises often. For instance, *wh*-questions are used in social interaction (*What's your name?*), for getting directions (*Where's the post office?*), in seeking explanations (*Why is the plane late?*), for learning vocabulary (*What's this?*), and so forth. Notice that while *yes/no* questions query an entire proposition, *wh*-questions are used when the speaker is missing a specific piece of information:

Did someone walk the dog? (general query about the truth of the proposition)

Who walked the dog? (speaker is asking for the name of the person who walked the dog)

The missing information can warrant more than a simple reply, however. Fox and Thompson (2010) distinguish between specifying *wh*-questions, which we have just illustrated, and “telling” *wh*-questions (*What did you do today?*), which may involve an extended reply. The nature of the missing piece of information conditions the selection of the question word, which most often begins with *wh*: *what*, *who*, *whose*, *which*, *when*, *why*, *where*, and *how* (*how* being the exception when it comes to spelling, although notice that *who*, *whose*, and *how* all begin with the /h/ sound).

Second language acquisition research tells us that English *wh*-questions, despite their usefulness, are not acquired especially early. This is presumably due to their variety and to the fact that English has two basic structures for *wh*-questions—one requiring inversion and one not. Thus, students struggle with inversion, and questions such as **Where you are going?* are common even at intermediate stages of proficiency.

It is also true, however, that some *wh*-questions are formed accurately by beginning language learners, presumably because learners have encountered and internalized frequently occurring questions as formulas or lexicalized units (e.g., *How are you? Where are you from?*). Because of their usefulness and their frequency, we feel that *wh*-questions should be taught from the very beginning of instruction, even if formulaically at first. Another challenge for ESL/EFL students is comprehending *wh*-questions, an issue that we treat in the meaning section of this chapter. We also address the use of questions in classroom discourse, a topic worthy of consideration by teachers.

The Form of Wh-Questions

As we stated previously, there are really two fundamental issues to be aware of regarding the form of *wh*-questions. The first has to do with the variety of constituents that can be queried with *wh*-questions. The second has to do with the two basic word orders characteristic of unmarked *wh*-questions.

VARIETY OF CONSTITUENTS

Consider the following sentence:

Lee wrote an angry memo to his boss before he quit.

A variety of constituents in this sentence can be queried in a *wh*-question:

Subject NP: **Who wrote an angry memo to his boss before he quit?** (Lee)

Object NP: **What did Lee write to his boss before he quit?** (an angry memo)

Object of the preposition: **To whom did Lee write an angry memo before he quit?**
(his boss)

—or—

Who(m) did Lee write an angry memo to before he quit?

(his boss)

Verb phrase: **What did Lee do before he quit?** (He wrote an angry memo to his boss.)

Determiner: **Whose boss did Lee write an angry memo to before he quit?** (his)

Adjective: **What kind of memo did Lee write?** (an angry memo)

Adverbial: **When did Lee write the angry memo to his boss?** (before he quit)

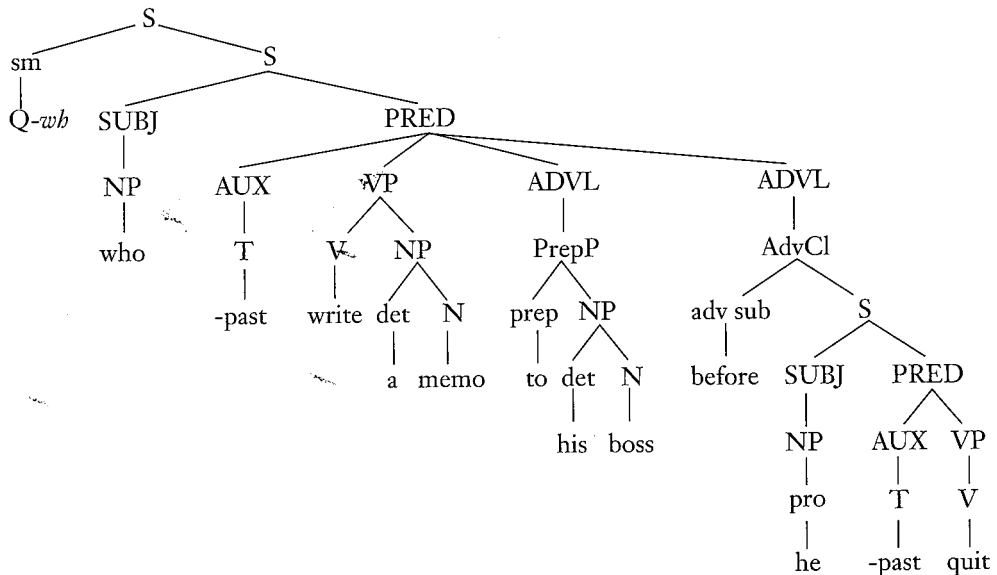
As can be seen, the scope of what is being asked for can range widely—from a whole verb phrase, for instance, to one part of a noun phrase as small as a possessive determiner, for example. In fact, we might almost say that *wh*-questions are statements with an information gap. The fact that English *wh*-questions have the same intonation pattern as statements supports this contention:¹

② ③ ①
Where is he going?

② ③ ①
He's going to the zoo.

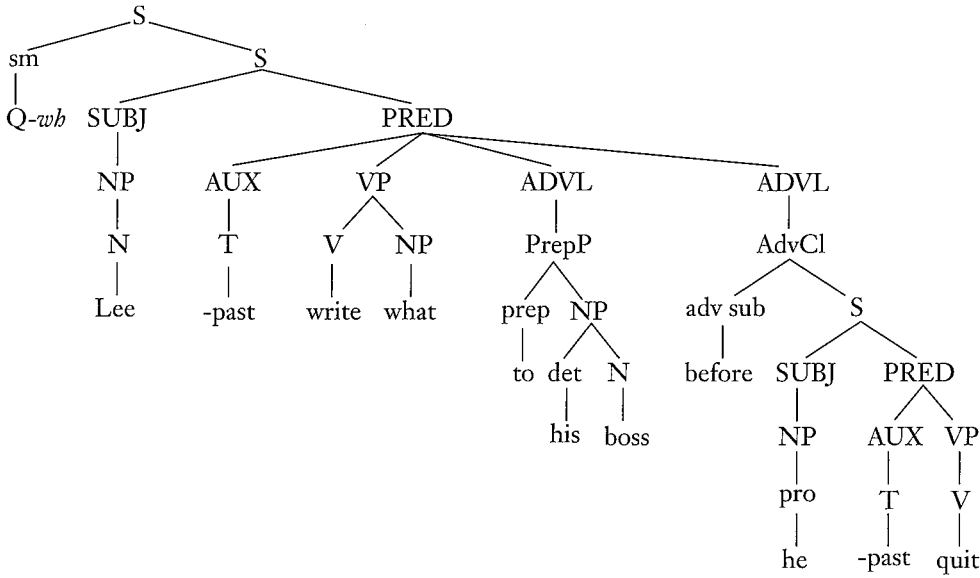
Underlying a *wh*-question is the assumption that some event or action has taken place or some state of affairs exists. The proposition expressing this assumption forms the basis for the tree. For example, the tree structure for a question where the information gap is represented by the subject is as follows, with the Q marked *wh* to reflect its more limited scope, as compared with *yes/no* questions:

Who wrote a memo to his boss before he quit?



Here's another one, where the information gap for this question exists in the object NP:

What did Lee write to his boss before he quit?

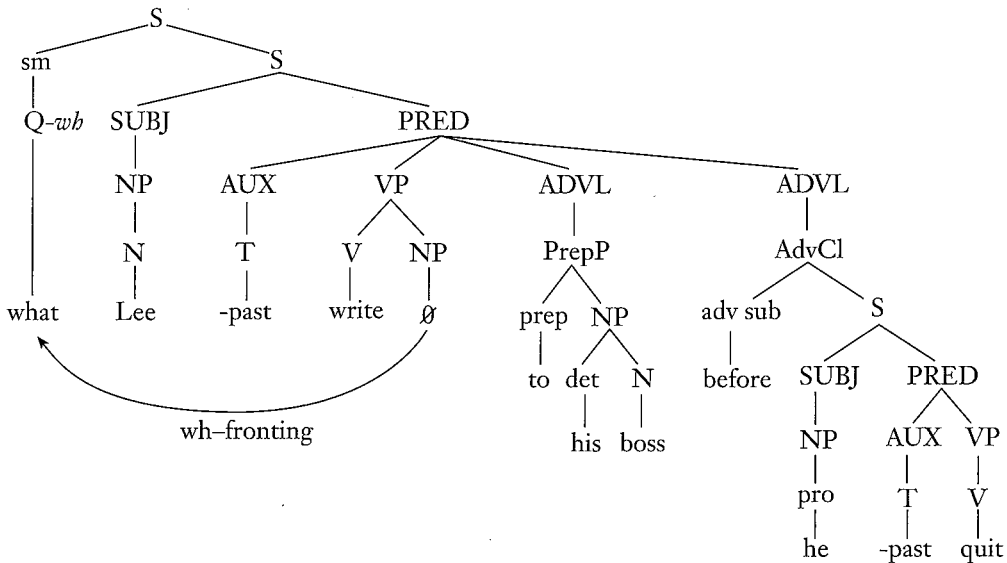


TWO BASIC WORD ORDERS: SUBJECT WH-QUESTIONS VERSUS PREDICATE WH-QUESTIONS

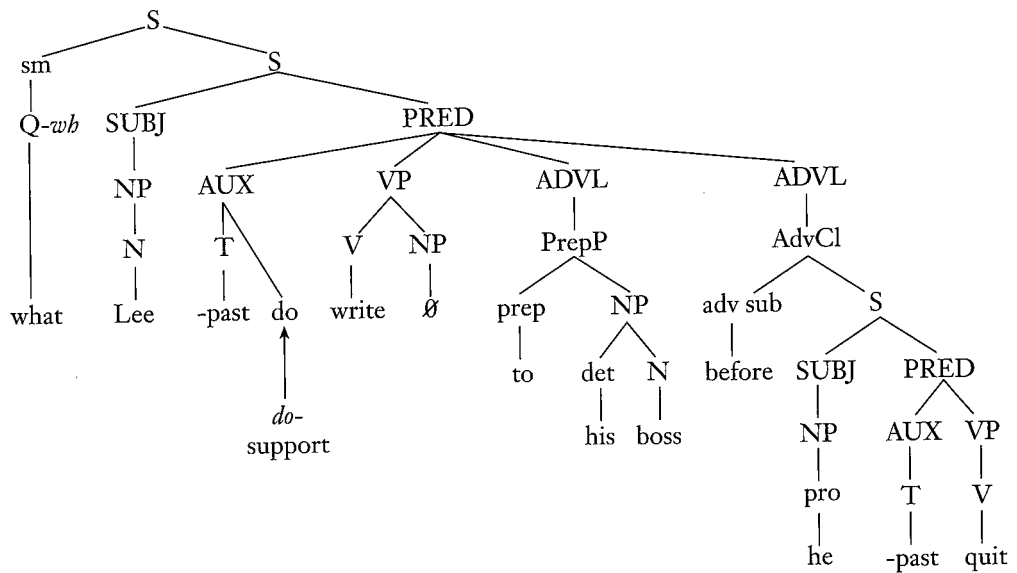
Notice the fundamental difference between the two previous example questions. The first one is straightforward. Since it is the subject that is being queried, and since the subject is already in the initial position in a sentence, no syntactic operations need to take place:

Who wrote a memo to his boss before he quit?

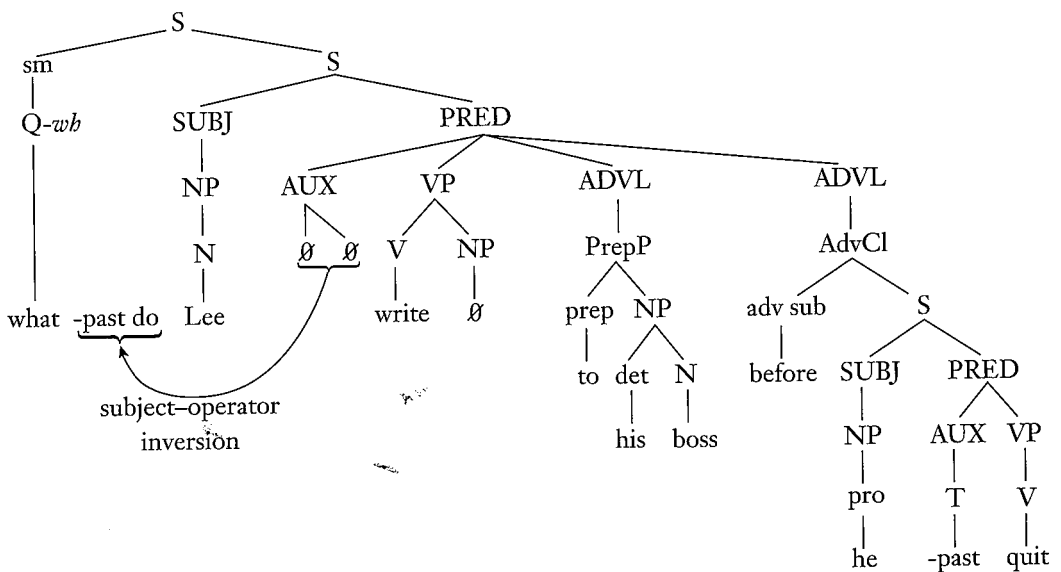
It is a different story with the second question, where it is the object NP that is being queried. In this tree, we see that the information gap is in the predicate; thus, the *wh*-question word is not in the sentence-initial position that it normally occupies in English. In order to deal with this matter, we will have to move the *wh*-question word to the front of the sentence:



Furthermore, you will note that every question we formed concerning Lee, save the subject-based *wh*-question, contains the *do* operator. This is because of the requirement in English that we invert the subject and operator if we have moved a *wh*-word from a position in the predicate to initial position. If there is no operator present, one must be added by means of *do*-support:

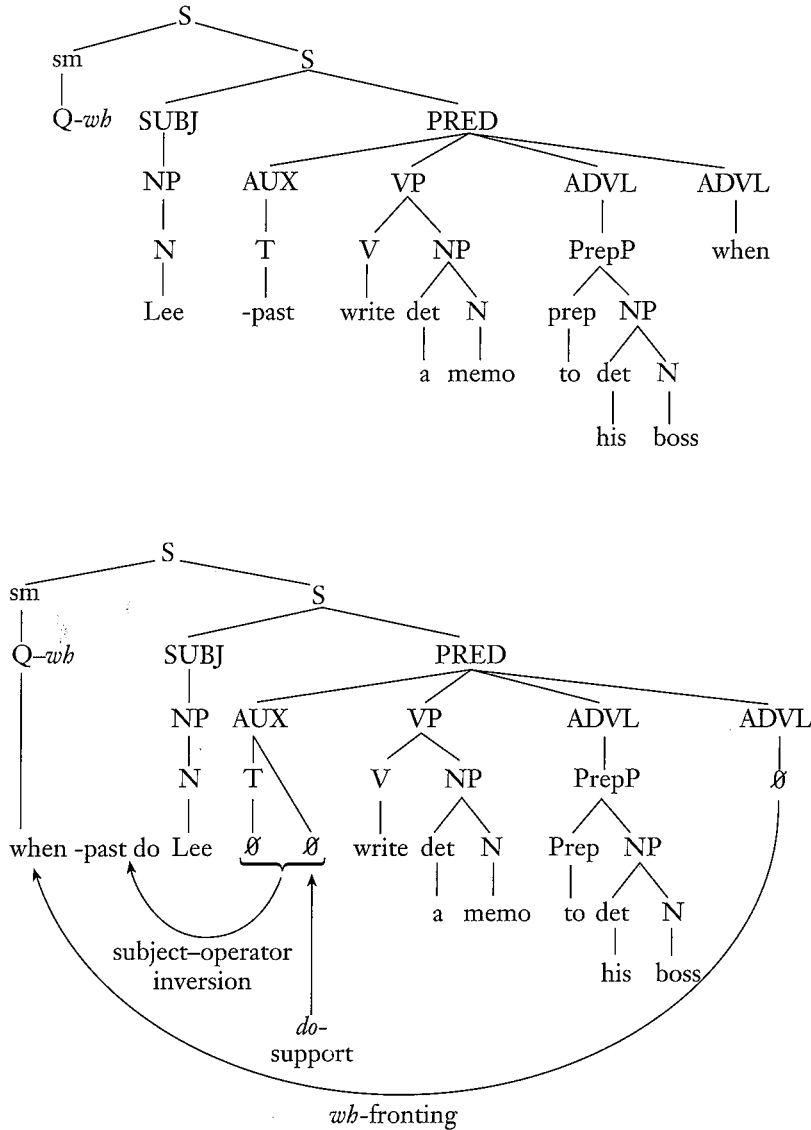


Then subject and operator can be inverted:



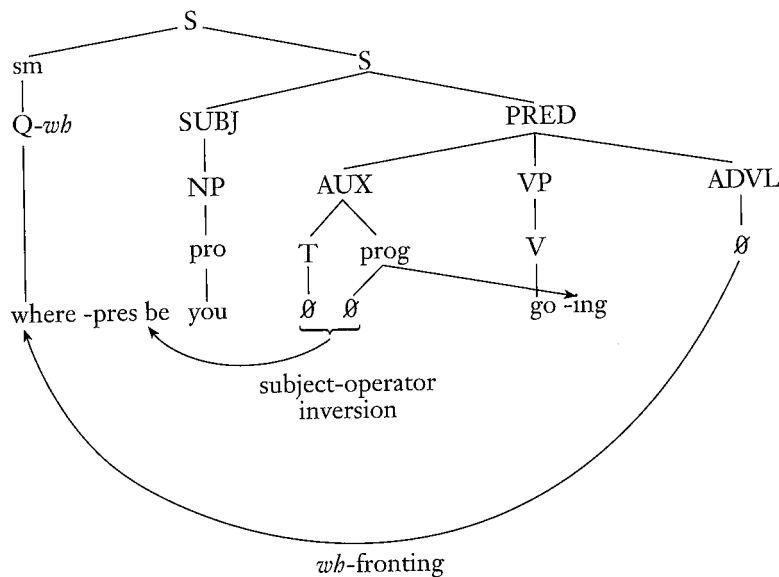
Here's another example of a tree where the gap occurs in the predicate position in the underlying proposition—the adverbial of time is being queried:

When did Lee write a memo to his boss?



Of course, if an operator is already present, then it will move when subject-operator inversion is applied. It will carry the tense, and *do*-support will be unnecessary:

Where are you going?



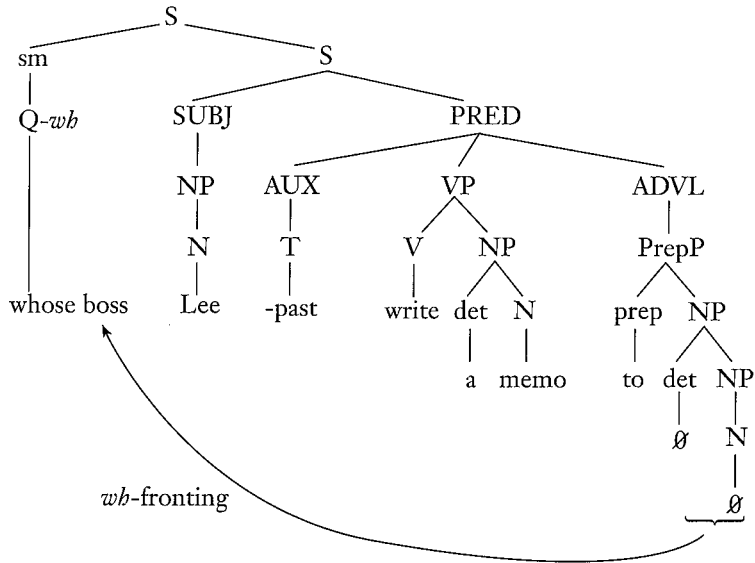
In sum, then, *wh*-questions in which some constituent in the subject is being queried are simpler syntactically than those in which something in the predicate is being queried. The former requires merely selecting the appropriate *wh*-question word (as discussed later in the chapter), given the focus of the inquiry. The latter involves fronting the *wh*-word from the position where the information gap occurs, adding the operator *do* if no other operator is present, and inverting the subject and operator.

We are not suggesting that English speakers go through all these steps to produce *wh*-questions online. As we stated at the outset of this chapter, *wh*-questions are often acquired formulaically. Dąbrowska (2008) claims that many of the questions in the spoken section of the British National Corpus are formed with the subject *you*, the verbs *think* or *say*, and the operator *do*. From a usage-based perspective, then, this seems to suggest that what is acquired is a kind of adjustable template, and it may make sense for teachers to work with their students on certain prototypical questions composed of these elements, at least at the beginning. However, teachers may later want to provide explicit guidance to their students regarding the syntactic formation of *wh*-questions. Indeed, the difference between questions that result from a gap in the subject versus questions that result from a gap in the predicate has consequences for the processing and comprehension of *wh*-questions (Lee, 2009).² Lee found that Korean students processed English subject-based questions more readily than predicate-based questions, presumably because of the greater distance between the *wh*-question word and the location of the gap in predicate-based questions. Lee also showed that this performance asymmetry was true for students at all levels of English proficiency.

SPECIAL CASES INVOLVING WH-FRONTING

If a determiner or adverb intensifier is the focus of a *wh*-question word, the constituent it modifies must be moved to the front of the string. This can be seen in the following question:

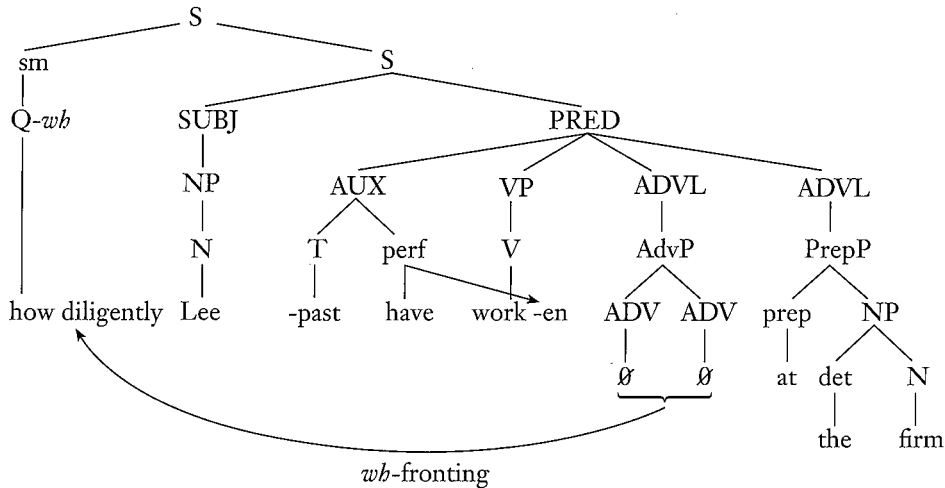
Whose boss did Lee write the memo to?



Because it is the possessive determiner that is being queried, the corresponding *wh*-question word is *whose*, and both *whose* and the constituent it modifies (here, the head noun *boss*) must be moved to the front of the sentence with *wh*-fronting. Then *do*-support and subject-operator inversion would be needed.

Two constituents must also be moved to the front when it is an adverb intensifier that is being queried:

How diligently had Lee worked at the firm?



The adverb *diligently* moves along with the ADV (intensifier) being queried (i.e., *how*), through *wh*-fronting. Notice also in this question that there is no need for *do*-support since the auxiliary verb *have* (from perf) is there to serve as operator for subject-operator inversion.

Another special case exists when the object of the preposition is the unknown element. When *wh*-fronting is applied, the preposition may either be left behind (linguists call this *preposition-stranding*) or be moved to the front of the string along with the NP (linguists call this *pied-piping*, based on the fairy tale “The Pied Piper of Hamelin”). While this choice is syntactically optional, you will note a difference in register depending on its application, with the first option below being more formal than the second, especially when *who* rather than *whom* is used as the *wh*-question word (we will say more about this choice later):

To whom did Lee write an angry memo before he quit? (with pied-piping)

Who(m) did Lee write an angry memo to before he quit? (with preposition stranding)

Finally, we occasionally encounter a *wh*-question where the question word is the object of a preposition within another prepositional phrase:

By virtue of what authority did Lee do that?

In such a case, the entire prepositional complex must be fronted; the preposition *of* or the words *by virtue of* cannot be left behind when *wh*-fronting takes place.

WH-QUESTIONS WITH THE COPULA BE

Before concluding our analysis of major *wh*-question types, let us also consider this example:

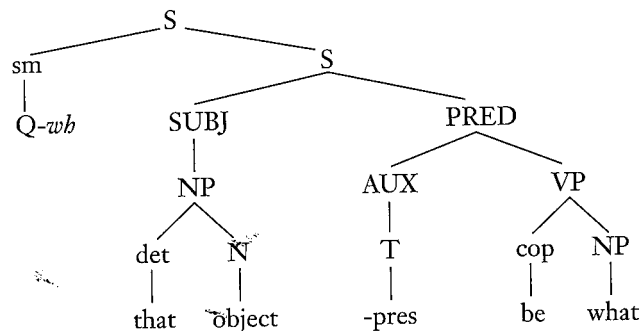
What is that object?

You may think at first that the subject NP is being questioned. However, you should ask yourself what the underlying proposition is—that is, whether it more closely resembles proposition a or b:

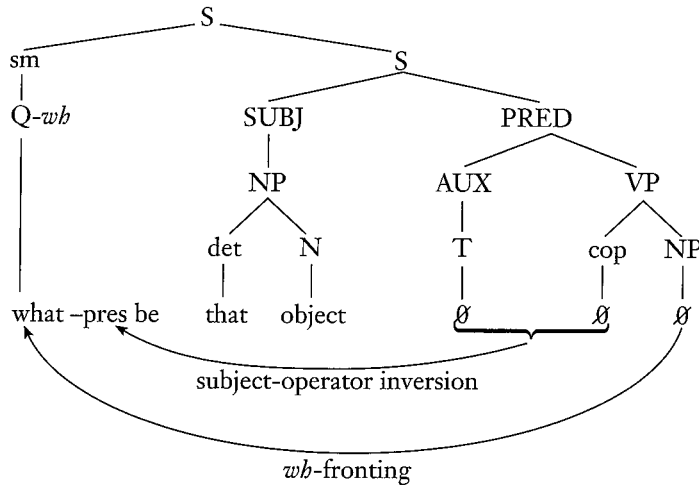
a. That object is a stethoscope.

b. A stethoscope is that object.

The answer, of course, is a; the predicate noun, not the subject noun, is being questioned. The correct tree for this question is:



There is no need for *do*-support here, for we know that the copula *be* can serve as an operator.



The point is that one must always fully reconstruct the underlying proposition when analyzing the form and meaning of a *wh*-question.

The Meaning of *Wh*-Questions

CHOOSING A *WH*-QUESTION WORD

A major clue to meaning is which *wh*-question word has been chosen. The choice, of course, depends on the gap/focus.

| <i>Gap/Focus</i> | | <i>Wh-Question Word</i> | <i>Example</i> |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|
| Subject NP [+ human] | → | who | Who did it? |
| Subject NP [- human] | → | what | What went wrong? |
| Subject Predicate [+ human] | → | who | Who is that? |
| Subject Predicate [- human] | → | what | What is that? |
| Object NP [+ human] | → | who(m)³ | Who(m) did you tell? To whom did she tell the story? |
| Object NP [- human] | → | what | What did she say? |
| det [possessive] | → | whose + NP | Whose idea was it? |
| det [demonstrative] | → | { which + NP } { what + NP } | Which excuse did they give? What alibi did they use? |

| | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| det [quantifier; –count] | → | how much + (NP) | How much (money) did they get? |
| det [quantifier; + count] | → | how many + (NP) | How many thieves were there? |
| det [quantifier] + measure word ⁴ | → | how long | How long did it take them? |
| ADJ [quality] | → | { how what... like } | How did they look? What did they look like? |
| ADJ [type] | → | what kind⁵ of (NP) | What kind of masks did they wear? |
| ADJ [color, size, nationality] | → | what + NP | What color were the masks? |
| ADV [intensifier] | → | { how + ADJ how + ADV } | How calm did they seem? How fast did they work? |
| VP | → | what... do | What did they do next? |
| ADVL [means] | → | how | How did they get away? |
| ADVL [direction] | → | where | Where did they go? |
| ADVL [position] | → | where | Where did they hide? |
| ADVL [time] | → | when | When were they discovered? |
| ADVL [manner] | → | how | How did she take the news? |
| ADVL [reason] | → | why | Why did they confess? |
| ADVL [purpose] | → | what... for | What did they do that for? |
| ADVL [frequency] | → | how often | How often does it end this way? |

Several observations need to be made about this list. First, these are general *wh*-words. It is also possible to ask very specific *wh*-questions about the same semantic domains. For instance, if we want to make a general query about the time of a specific event, we could ask,

When is the concert?

but we could also ask about the time of a specific event, using more specific *wh*-questions:

What date is the concert?

Which day is the concert?

What time is the concert?

Similarly, we could ask a question about direction using *where*, but we could also ask a more precise question using *which way*:

Where did they go?

Which way did they go?

The same is true at the clausal level. We can ask a very general “telling” *wh*-question about an event:

What happened?

or we can ask specifying questions about the event:

What did the thieves do?

or even just about the action—that is, the verb:

What did the thieves do to the bank teller?

Stivers (2010) collected 350 questions recorded in American English conversations and categorized them by question type. Among the *wh*-questions, she found that the most common were the *what* questions, mostly involving questions about prior talk (e.g., *What do you mean?*). The second-largest number of questions asked about objects (*What's this?*) and events (*What'd you do?*). The next most common *wh*-questions involved the question word *how*, with most of these involving inquiries about personal/event states (*How are you? How was it?*). Another subset concerned quantity, and the rest involved questions about manner and length.

UNINVERTED WH-QUESTIONS

As with *yes/no* questions, it is also possible to use uninverted *wh*-questions. These questions do not require *wh*-fronting and subject-operator inversion. Sometimes these are just “echo” questions, in which the listener is signaling to the speaker that he or she didn't hear a part of what was just said:

A: I expect to be going to Hawaii for the holidays.

B: You expect to be going where for the holidays?

A: To Hawaii.

Alternatively, just the *wh*-question word can be used as a repair to signal that something was not heard (Weber, 1989):

A: I expect to be going to Hawaii for the holidays.

B: Where?

A: To Hawaii.

However, if B's reply had been said with pitch above the normal range (especially on *where*), then A would have interpreted B's uninverted question as expressing surprise or disbelief:

A: I am going to Hawaii for the holidays.

B: You're going where for the holidays?

A: I know. Lucky me!

It is even possible to mark more than one constituent Q-*wh* (e.g., *Who said what to whom?*) in uninverted *wh*-questions.

EMPHATIC QUESTIONS WITH -EVER

English speakers use *-ever* with *wh*-question words to make them emphatic. Such questions express a variety of emotions:

Dismay: **Wherever did you get that idea?**

Admiration: **However did you manage it?**

Perplexity: **Whatever does she see in him?**

and we often put heavy stress on its first syllable in spoken questions:

Wherever did you pick that up?

NEGATIVE *WH*-QUESTIONS

We have already seen the semantic difference between negative and affirmative *yes/no* questions. Such can be the case with *wh*-questions as well. Negative questions are influenced by the speaker's expectation, such as a teacher realizing that she still has one paper in hand, as here:

Who hasn't gotten their assignment back?

As with negative *yes/no* questions, negative *wh*-questions can be used for a negative assertion:

What did John say? (an unmarked neutral question)

What didn't John say? (implying that he talked a great deal or that he withheld information)

Why didn't you answer when I called?
Why haven't I been invited? } (accusing the interlocutor of an omission)

Where didn't you go? (You seemed to go everywhere.)
What didn't happen? (Everything seemed to happen.) } (commenting on the lack of omission)

Notice also, as with *yes/no* questions, there are two acceptable forms of negative *wh*-questions depending on whether *not* has been contracted:

When isn't it a good time?

When is it not a good time?

The Use of *Wh*-Questions

YES/NO QUESTIONS VERSUS *WH*-QUESTIONS

As mentioned in the introduction, *yes/no* questions query an entire proposition, and *wh*-questions query a specific part of the proposition. In other words, the pragmatic context for using most *wh*-question words is one in which the speaker already assumes that the listener knows the proposition. If this knowledge cannot be assumed, the speaker would use a *yes/no* question to establish the proposition. Once this is done, *wh*-questions would be employed to elicit specific details:

A: Did you go to the concert last night?

B: Yeah.

A: How was it?

Notice that if A had incorrectly assumed shared knowledge of the proposition, and thus began with a *wh*-question, a communication breakdown might have occurred. Had A assumed too much, this would have necessitated some sort of communicative repair:

A: How was the concert?

B: What concert?

SOCIAL USES

Of some pedagogical import is the fact that certain fixed formulaic *wh*-questions serve social functions. These would certainly seem to be candidates for teaching. Among them are certain combinations with *how* and *what*:

Introductions: **How do you do? What do you do?**

Greetings: **How are you? How have you been? What's new? What's up? What's happening?**

Eliciting personal reactions: **How was the X?** (e.g., *How was the test?*)

and one with *why* + *not*:

Making suggestions: **Why don't you X?** (e.g., *Why don't you ask?*)

A subset of these formulaic questions might be called truncated *wh*-questions (Schonbeck, 1982) because they are actually question fragments, which appear to be used for particular functions in informal conversations. While they are not used exclusively for these functions, the following are common:

Making a suggestion: **How about X?** (e.g., *How about a movie?*)

Responding positively to a suggestion: **Why not?**

Expressing exasperation: **What now? or Now what?**

Seeking another's opinion: **How about you?**

Challenging another's opinion: **How come? What for? Since when?**

Expressing perplexity: **What to do?**

UNINVERTED WH-QUESTIONS

In Chapter 11, we made the point that uninverted *yes/no* questions can seem offensive because they imply a certain level of social familiarity. Anecdotal evidence suggests that caution would be in order when using uninverted *wh*-questions as well. One ESL teacher told us that he had taught uninverted *wh*-questions to his students. One of them was called to the dean's office soon thereafter. The dean talked about something he had done recently, and the student asked for clarification with "You did what?" The dean told the student that he was being rude by asking the question this way, and the ESL teacher reports that the student returned to class feeling somewhat betrayed!

ELLIPTICAL QUESTIONS

In very informal conversations, it is also possible to encounter *wh*-question fragments that focus on the predicate and have a deleted auxiliary, such as these:

| <i>Question</i> | <i>Deleted Auxiliary</i> |
|---|--------------------------|
| Where you been hiding? | (have) |
| What you (Whatcha) doing? | (are) |
| How we going to (gonna) do that? | (are) |

Like the elliptical *yes/no* questions, these *wh*-questions have auxiliaries that are recoverable from other information in the sentences. In very informal contexts, redundant function words such as auxiliaries can be deleted, and other phonological reductions and assimilations often take place.

ANSWERS TO *WH*-QUESTIONS

At the opposite end of the continuum from reductions in *wh*-questions are full clausal answers to *wh*-questions. Fox and Thompson (2010) examined all instances of *wh*-questions in their collection of American English conversations among friends and family members. They make the point that most answers to such questions are phrasal. Here is an excerpt from one of their examples, in which Molly is asking Felicia directions to Felicia's home:

Molly: How far up the canyon are you?

Felicia: Ten miles.

Phrasal answers, such as Felicia gives here, provide the precise information being sought by the questioner. Thus, when a full clausal answer is given, Fox and Thompson (2010) suggest that the question may be perceived as problematic in some way. Again, here is an excerpt, adapted from one of their examples. The numbers in parentheses indicate the length of a pause in seconds:

Teresa: What time did we get home?

(0.4)

Betty: We got home at one thirty.

(0.9)

The fact that Betty's response to Teresa's question follows a pause, contains the same words as the question, which further delays delivery of the information being sought, and is followed by an even longer pause suggests that Betty sees the question as problematic for some reason, according to Fox and Thompson (2010). Their interpretation is supported by the fact that Betty's answer shows rising intonation, instead of falling intonation, which Fox and Thompson say is due to its defensive nature. Fox and Thompson conclude that their data support the hypothesis that full clausal responses to *wh*-questions are given when the responder treats the question as problematic.

It seems to us that ESL/EFL teachers may wish to heed the lesson here and not insist on their students giving full clausal answers to *wh*-questions, which may be interpreted differently from what the student intended.

WHO/WHOM

Earlier, we noted that *who* is the *wh*-question word that queries the subject and that *whom* queries the object. While this is prescriptively correct, ESL/EFL students will likely encounter *who* being used for both foci:

Who asked? (subject focus)

Who did you tell? (object focus)

However, when the *wh*-question word is querying the object of a preposition, and the preposition has been fronted through *wh*-fronting with pied-piping, *whom* should be used:

To whom was the message delivered?

***To who was the message delivered?**

QUESTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

The final topic that we take up in this chapter has to do with the role of questions in the classroom. First of all, the *IRF* (or *initiation-response-feedback*) pattern in classroom discourse is well known. Teachers pose a question, a student answers, and the teacher gives the student

feedback on the response. On a related note, it has been frequently observed that teachers pose *display questions* to their students. In contrast to *referential questions* (or genuine questions) that teachers do not know the answer to, display questions are posed so that teachers can elicit answers from their students to assess students' comprehension:

Teacher: What does the word "inert" mean?

Sometimes these display questions take the form of uninverted *wh*-questions:

Teacher: So this story is about what?

Koshik (2002) shows how teachers can skillfully use questions in eliciting self-repair from students. By employing "designedly incomplete utterances," repeating a portion of a student's utterance with rising intonation, the teacher can encourage the student to focus on the trouble spot. Display questions can, of course, also take the form of inverted *wh*-questions:

Teacher: Why might we want to use a transition word here?

a common form of display questions used in writing conferences (Hilder, 1997).

This is perhaps also an opportune time to discuss *unwarranted questions* (Borge, 2007). According to Borge, "A question is unwarranted if the person asking the question is not in a position, formally or informally, to rightfully inquire into whatever is the subject matter of the question and thus is not in a position to expect an honest answer or any answer at all" (p. 1690). While teachers' questions would not normally be unwarranted, of course, there are times when ESL students may be reluctant to disclose personal details in a classroom for fear that they might jeopardize their immigrant status or because the circumstances that forced them to become refugees are too painful to report. Obviously, sensitivity is called for on such occasions. Of course, students themselves may also ask questions that are acceptable in their culture, but not usually so in the English-speaking world (e.g., *How old are you? How much did your purse cost?*). Helping students learn about cultural differences in what one can politely ask of those who are not close friends might be useful.

Concluding this section on a more upbeat note, we can point to Ko's (2014) research into the dynamic and interactive nature of language use in classrooms. Ko makes the sensible observation that students' multiple responses to teachers' questions, when the teacher addresses the question to the whole class, can provide an opportunity for students to share participation and to learn from each other.

Conclusion

We started out in this chapter by making the claim that *wh*-questions should be taught early on to ESL/EFL students, even if only formulaically. Aside from problems with inversion, we expect beginners to have few problems in acquiring some rudimentary questions and in learning to reply to certain others. Ironically, intermediate students, who have mastered inversion, sometimes make the mistake of inverting in questions where subject-operator inversion does not occur. Such is the case with indirect questions. Chan (2010) reports EFL students saying, "I don't know where is it," or in other words, overgeneralizing inversion to indirect *wh*-questions. We will have more to say about indirect questions in Chapter 33, but for now, let us recommend systematically introducing more advanced students to marked forms such as negative, uninverted, and elliptical *wh*-questions. For them, the challenge lies in mastering their meaning and use. Finally, it is worth pointing out that while we are expressly treating grammar, it is also the case that someone's gaze and body language, the sequence of their turns, and their role (e.g., student or teacher) will also explain why turn types that do not conform with the syntax of interrogative questions are still understood as questions

(Belilah, 2012). Clearly, there are many and varied semiotic resources available to language users besides lexicogrammar.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** When working with beginning students, it is advisable to do some early work with subject NP focus in *wh*-questions so that they can become familiar with some common *wh*-words without worrying about subject-operator inversion at the same time:

Who is writing on the board?

What happened?

One way of practicing such questions is to ask everyone in the room to keep doing something different from the others. The teacher can then establish the pattern with the present progressive:

Teacher: Who is opening the windows?

Students: Ramon (is).

Teacher: Who is tapping her pencil?

Students: Michele (is).

Then the students can take over the activity:

Student 1: Who is drawing pictures?

Student 2: Ali (is).

Student 2: Who is sleeping?

Student 3: Yen-Mai (is).

2. **Use.** As we have said in this chapter, students at the beginning levels of instruction will probably learn inverted questions as lexicalized units or formulas. Useful questions of this type to teach are those that students can use to further their knowledge of English. We have in mind such questions as these:

What is the meaning of *X*? or What does *X* mean?

How do you spell *X*?

How do you pronounce *X*?

How do you say *Y* in English? (where *Y* = a word or phrase in the student's L1)

A teacher might give students practice with these by giving each student in class a vocabulary word and its definition on a card. Students have to circulate and ask questions and take notes on each other's vocabulary items. For example:

Student 1: What is your word?

Student 2: Butcher.

Student 1: How do you spell "butcher"?

Student 2: B..u..t..c..h..e..r.

Student 1: What does "butcher" mean?

Student 2: A person who sells meat.

3. **Form.** The easiest and most frequent *wh*-questions involving subject-operator inversion contain the *be* copula. To facilitate practice of this pattern, the teacher can bring in several bags of kitchen utensils and gadgets. Each small group of students is given a bag. Beginning-level students will not likely have full control of the vocabulary. Students can work in small groups, and individuals can ask others in the group questions such as:

Student 1: What's this? (holding up something he or she has picked from the bag)

Student 2: A can opener.

Student 2: (selecting something else) What's this?

Student 3: A funnel.

Student 3: What are these?

Student 4: Measuring spoons.

If no one in the group can identify one or more items, they will need to ask other groups for assistance. They should identify all the objects in the bag that they can and then get together with another group to teach them the names of things they might not know and to ask them for help with the names of things they have not yet identified.

4. **Form.** The biggest problem for beginning students—and often intermediate students too—is forming a *wh*-question that requires subject-operator inversion with a main verb other than the *be* copula.

N. Reed (personal communication) has developed a useful strategy for relating information students have already learned about subject-operator inversion in *yes/no* questions to the generation of *wh*-questions. She asks students *yes/no* questions and then follows up each *yes/no* question immediately with a more specific *wh*-question structurally related to the *yes/no* question. Here's an example:

Teacher: Are you studying at NYU ?
Student: Yes. =
Teacher: What are you studying ?
Student: Law.
Teacher: Will you be a lawyer someday ?
Student: Yes. =
Teacher: When will you be one ?
Student: In two years.
Teacher: Do you live in New York ?
Student: Yes. =
Teacher: What area do you live in ?
Student: Greenwich Village.
Teacher: Did you take the English placement test ?
Student: Yes. =
Teacher: When did you take it ?
Student: September 15.

Next, Ms. Reed cues a student to ask another student a *yes/no* question, which he or she then follows with an appropriate *wh*-question that the teacher can cue if necessary. Eventually, the students are able to carry on such dialogues without cues, and they get a lot of practice using *wh*-questions that require subject-operator inversion and, where needed, the addition of *do*. The relationship between *yes/no* questions and these types of *wh*-questions has been made explicit, and the recurrence of common questions such as **What you are doing?* can thus be reduced.

5. **Meaning.** Information-gap activities are ideal for working with the meaning of a variety of *wh*-question words. The teacher prepares a class information sheet with the names of categories on the horizontal axis and the names of some students on the vertical axis. Some of the cells of the grid are completed, but not all of them. One half of the class is given this sheet. A similar sheet is prepared for the other half of the class. On this sheet, the cells missing the information on the first sheet are completed, but other cells are empty. In pairs, students have to ask and answer questions in order to complete their class information sheets. For example:

Sheet A

| Student | Native Country | Native Language | How long studying English | Major |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Ketut Sudha | Indonesia | <input type="text"/> | 10 years | <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/> | Mexico | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | Nursing |
| <input type="text"/> | Japan | Japanese | 12 years | <input type="text"/> |

Sheet B

| Student | Native Country | Native Language | How long studying English | Major |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | Indonesian | <input type="text"/> | Biology |
| Nina Rojas | <input type="text"/> | Spanish | 8 years | <input type="text"/> |
| Eiko Watanabe | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | Music |

Student 1: What language does Ketut speak?

Student 2: Indonesian. Where does Nina come from?

Student 1: Mexico. Who comes from Japan?

Student 2: Eiko. How long has she been studying English?

6. **Meaning.** Write a number of *wh*-questions down the left side of a piece of paper and their answers down the right side. Cut the paper apart vertically so that the answers are separate from the questions. Now cut the answers up and scramble them, and do the same with the questions. Have each student take one slip of paper from each pile. The students must go around the room asking the question on their pieces of paper to each other until they find an answer that matches. When a student has found a match for both the answer and question, he or she should come to you and get a new pair. Do this until all of the questions and answers have been matched (adapted from Ur, 2009).
7. **Use.** Role plays are helpful for practicing the social use of truncated *wh*-questions. For example, a teacher might set up a situation where three friends are trying to decide what to do that evening. We might expect language of the following sort to be used:

A: How about a movie?

B: Sounds good to me. How about you, C?

C: Sure. Why not? What about the one at the Paramount?

A: I have seen it already. Why don't we try the First Cinema?

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

- Provide original example sentences that illustrate the following concepts.
 - wh*-question focusing on the subject
 - wh*-question focusing on an object of a preposition (Give both versions.)
 - wh*-question focusing on a determiner:
 - possessive
 - demonstrative
 - quantifier
 - uninverted *wh*-question
 - negative *wh*-question:
 - contracted
 - uncontracted
 - formulaic *wh*-question (lexicalized unit)
 - wh*-question with ellipsis of the auxiliary
- Draw tree diagrams, put in the arrows, and label the arrows to form each of the following *wh*-questions:
 - How is your father?
 - Who(m) should we invite to the party?
 - How long is the table?
 - What did you understand?
 - Where does your brother study physics?
- Why are the following sentences ungrammatical?

***Which did he buy car? *Whose did he steal handbag?**
- The general *wh*-question word for ADVL [position] is where.

Where do you live?

What are some more specific *wh*-questions we use to ask about position?

Test your ability to apply what you know

- Diagnose the issues with the following questions, made by ESL/EFL students:
 - *Where you are going?
 - *What you want?
 - *To whom did he say that to?
 - *Where Benny?
- It has been suggested that why, what . . . for, and how come are *wh*-question words that all may be used to ask the same question.

Why did he say that? What did he say that for? How come he said that?

What are some differences in form, meaning, and use among these expressions? Cite cases where they cannot be used to paraphrase one another.
- The following *wh*-questions have been written on the blackboard of an ESL/EFL classroom. The object of the class is to review *wh*-questions in the simple past.
 - What did you do yesterday?
 - Where did you go?
 - What happened?
 - Who went with you?
 - When did you get home?

One of the students asks the teacher why three of the questions have a did while the other two do not. If you were the teacher, how would you answer this student's question?

8. A student asks you why there are two do verbs in What do you do? How would you answer?

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For useful linguistic descriptions of *wh*-questions, see:

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Endnotes

1. Recall, though, when we discussed the intonation of *yes/no* questions, we mentioned Couper-Kuhlen's (2012) research. She found that some *wh*-questions have final rising intonation. Her explanation for this finding is that intonation contours are affected by the context of use, and no decontextualized pronouncements are going to hold for all occasions.
2. This is a much studied area because of its implications for linguistic theory. See Cheng and Corver (2006) and Lee (2009) for discussion.
3. See the discussion of *who/whom* in the section on the use of *wh*-questions later in this chapter.
4. Other common measure words in combination with *how* are *deep*, *old*, *high*, *long*, *big*, and *far*. Answers to such questions would be in the appropriate unit, such as *feet*, *years*, and *miles*.
5. *Kind* is not the only word that occurs here: *type* and *sort* also are used in this construction.

Tag, Alternative, Exclamatory, and Rhetorical Questions

Introduction

In this chapter, we discuss four constructions that look like questions but that function differently from the *yes/no* and *wh*-questions we have examined in Chapters 11 and 13, respectively. The four constructions are tag questions, alternative questions, exclamatory questions, and rhetorical questions. Despite the “question” label, these constructions are not necessarily used to seek information. They are common enough, though, that ESL/EFL students should learn to recognize and respond to them appropriately. Indeed, these structures may cause as many problems for ESL/EFL students in comprehension as they do in production.

Tag Questions

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FORM OF TAG QUESTIONS

Why the Form of Tag Questions Is Problematic

The prototypical tag question includes two parts: a short question form, called the “tag,” appended to a clause, called the “anchor.” The tag generally contrasts in polarity with the anchor; that is, when the anchor is affirmative, the tag is negative, and vice versa:

Your aunt *is* coming today, *isn't* she?

Your aunt *isn't* coming today, *is* she?

While most other languages have a construction equivalent to the English tag question, the equivalent tag is often invariant. For example, French has *n'est-ce pas*, German has *nicht wahr*, Swedish has *inte sant* and *elle hur*, Standard Arabic has *alaysa kathaleka*, and Mandarin Chinese has *ma* (a particle spoken with a rising tone). Consequently, speakers of such languages have been known to overgeneralize one frequently occurring tag in English:

***She's coming today, *isn't* it?**

In some languages, the tag-formation convention consists merely of adding to a clause the equivalent for *no* or *yes* with rising intonation. Translated literally into English, this convention produces utterances like the following, which are not uncommon among ESL/EFL learners:

***We don't have homework today, *yes*?¹**

Then, too, not all languages use clause-final tags. For example, tag-question particles may appear before the clause in Polish, after the first constituent of the clause in Ute, or after the focused constituent in Russian (Weber, 1989).

The Syntax and Morphology of Tag Questions in English

In English, tags are normally sentence final, following clausal anchors. In written form, a comma separates the anchor from the tag. If a tag is sentence medial, commas set off the tag, and the terminal punctuation is still a question mark:

It's human, isn't it, to hope that peace among all people in the world is possible?

Anchors may also be subjectless phrases (Kay, 2002), though such phrases can usually be related to full clauses:

Nice house, isn't it? (*It's a nice house, isn't it?*)

Tags are syntactically like abbreviated unmarked *yes/no* questions, in that they require subject-operator inversion:

They can't do that, can they? (*they can?)

He's the one you wish to speak to, isn't he? (*he isn't?)

When there is no auxiliary verb or *be* verb in the anchor, then a *do* verb must be introduced in the tag as an operator to carry the tense.²

She assigned homework, didn't she?

Unlike *yes/no* questions, however, additional steps must be taken to form tags. First of all, most tag questions have reversed polarity—that is, if the anchor is affirmative, the tag is negative; if the anchor is negative, the tag is affirmative. (Tags with constant polarity are discussed later in this chapter.) The anchor can be negative by virtue of having a negative preverbal adverb of frequency (see Chapter 25), such as *never*:

Budi has never seen snow, has he?

According to Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999), tag questions with affirmative anchors and negative tags are much more common than tag questions with negative anchors and affirmative tags, although in their large-scale corpus study, Tottie and Hoffman (2006) found that American English speakers were more likely than British English speakers to use negative anchors with affirmative tags. Overall, however, tag questions were more common in British English than in American English.

Of the four registers examined by Biber et al. (1999), tag questions appeared primarily in conversation, though there were also many examples from fiction and others from newspaper language and academic prose. See Tottie & Hoffman (2009) for the use of tags in writing.

Negative tags have two forms. By far, the more common is the contracted form. It is also syntactically possible, although stylistically formal, to have a full, uncontracted negative form; in this case, however, the negative particle *not* must be separated from the verb:

You have missed a lot of practices, haven't you?

You have missed a lot of practices, have you not?

***You have missed a lot of practices, have not you?**

Another difference between anchor and tag can be seen in the subjects of each. If the subject of the anchor is not a pronoun, it must be pronominalized in the tag.

Megan is quite a basketball player, isn't she? (*isn't Megan?)

The only word that can be used as the subject in the tag that is not a personal pronoun is the nonreferential *there* (see Chapter 23).

There are a lot of social events at this time of year, aren't there?

Tottie and Hoffmann (2006) found that the five most frequently used tags in American English are *isn't it*, *don't you*, *do you*, *is it*, and *doesn't it*.

Idiosyncratic Tag Questions

One further note should be made here with regard to the form of tag questions. Certain tags are idiosyncratic. The verb in a tag might not correspond to the verb in the anchor, or the anchor may be imperative instead of declarative:

Let's go, shall we?

I am going, aren't I?

We ought to go, shouldn't we?

Open the door, won't you?

Also, numerous unsystematic lexical-type tags are used informally:³

You aren't going, right?

You are going, O.K.?

You aren't going, huh?

You are going, no?

Responding to Tag Questions

As we hinted in the introduction to this chapter, it may be more important for ESL/EFL students to know how to reply to tag questions than to be able to produce the full form accurately. It is worth noting, then, that tag questions are rarely responded to with short answers. In other words, the following response to a tag question is somewhat unusual:

A: She's a brilliant chess player, isn't she?

B: Yes, she is.

Out of 80 tag questions in her corpus of oral and written data, Brown (1981) found only three instances of such a short answer, and only one of these consisted simply of a *yes* or *no* and the short form. In her corpus, 30 percent of the tag questions received no answer at all. Others received affirmative answers, such as *That's right*, or some reply in which additional information would be offered:

A: Science is your favorite subject, isn't it?

B: Has been since I was five. (Carterette & Jones, 1974, p. 262, cited in Brown, 1981)

When listeners disagreed with the speaker, they would give an explanation for the disagreement:

A: . . . They can't get that big, can they, Wendy?

B: Well, when they stretch, yes.

English speakers can also employ other confirmers, including complete sentences:

A: The moon is supposed to be full tonight. Isn't that right?

B: Yeah, that's right.

Speakers apparently use full-form confirmers when they want explicit confirmation that what they said is correct. All the full-sentence confirmers in Brown's corpus were answered, compared with the 30 percent of the tags in Brown's corpus that went unanswered.

THE MEANING OF TAG QUESTIONS

The meaning of tag questions is reflected in their form: A tag question is a question attached to a statement. In other words, something is being asserted to which the listener is invited to respond. Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin with Griner (2010) distinguish between tag questions confirming facts or eliciting agreement and those signaling uncertainty. Intonation is key in making this distinction. Tags with falling intonation call for confirmation of or agreement with the assertion in the anchor. In contrast, tags with rising intonation signal some uncertainty about the information in the anchor.

Celce-Murcia et al. compare tags with falling intonation to prototypical statements and tags with rising intonation to prototypical *yes/no* questions.

Compared with *yes/no* questions, tag questions express a greater degree of either negative or positive certainty with regard to the truth of the underlying proposition:⁴

Strongest bias toward negative certainty
↑ **Sally didn't finish her report, did she?** (falling intonation)
Sally didn't finish her report, did she? (rising intonation)
Did Sally finish her report?
Didn't Sally finish her report?
↓ **Sally finished her report, didn't she?** (rising intonation)
Sally finished her report, didn't she? (falling intonation)
Strongest bias toward positive certainty

Marked Tag Questions

Although far less common than their unmarked counterparts, marked tag questions, instead of having a polar contrast in the affirmative-negative or negative-affirmative marking of the anchor and tag (with reversed polarity), have an anchor and tag that are nonpolar, or noncontrasting (constant polarity):

affirmative affirmative
You're an accountant, are you?
You call yourself a writer, do you?
negative negative
So I can't, can't I?

To make sense of these nonpolar tags in North American English, we interpret them as conveying some additional nuance of meaning. For example, the first could be a confirmation check expressing some doubt or reservation; the second might be sarcasm; the third could be a dare. Thus, it seems that marked tags in North American English have emotional overtones.⁵

THE USE OF TAG QUESTIONS

Pragmatic Types

In their study of tag questions in oral discourse, Tottie and Hoffmann (2006) classified examples from their corpus into six different pragmatic types (p. 300–301). Since they used corpora where intonation was not marked, they were not able to report the intonation for the six types; however, their classification is partially based on Algeo (1990), who indicates intonation contours for some of these functions, and where they are available, we report them here.

1. Informational (The speaker makes a genuine request for information.) (rising intonation)
You know my friend Marie, don't you?
2. Confirmatory (The speaker wants confirmation that what he/she said is correct.) (falling intonation)
We have to leave by 8:00, don't we?
3. Attitudinal (The speaker is emphasizing a point and does not expect a response.)
Nothing stays the same, does it? We always have to be prepared for change.
4. Facilitating (The speaker is certain of the truth of the statement but wants to involve the listener.)
That IS a problem, isn't it?

5. Peremptory (The speaker closes discussion and discourages the listener from responding.) (falling intonation)

He was a mean person, wasn't he? Let's just forget about him.

6. Aggressive (The speaker insults or provokes the listener.)

You don't even know how to tell the truth, do you?

Tottie and Hoffman report that of these six pragmatic types, confirmatory, facilitating, and attitudinal account for 90 percent of their data. Idiosyncratic tags may have different functions. For example, tags can be added to imperatives to soften them or to make them more like requests or invitations (e.g., *Come in, won't you?*).

Brown (1981) also found that tag questions seem to be a way that the speaker has of seeking confirmation of his or her assertion. This explains why there are more negative than affirmative tags in Brown's data: speakers use negative tags to invite correction. Another fact about form that this function helps explain is the infrequent use of the first person. A person is the best source of information about opinions or inferences about himself or herself; consequently, he or she would generally not seek confirmation of such information from another, although people occasionally add tags like the following, perhaps inviting disconfirmation:

I'm being silly, aren't I?

Alternative Questions

YES/NO VERSUS ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS

Variously referred to as an *alternative question*, a *choice question*, and an *or-question*, this questionlike construction offers listeners a choice between two or more alternatives:

A: Would you rather study physics, biology, or chemistry next semester?

B: Chemistry, I think.

While the syntax is that of a *yes/no* question, the intonation pattern is not. A *yes* or *no* answer would thus be inappropriate, yet this is often the response given by ESL/EFL students.

A: Would you like regular or decaf?

B: *Yes, please.

Of course, the listener may choose to reject the options and propose different ones:

Yes/No Question with Or

Alternative Question

A: Do you take cream or milk in your coffee?

A: Do you take cream or milk in your coffee?

B: Actually, neither. But do you have any soy milk?

To distinguish between both types of questions, ESL/EFL students need to learn the intonational contours for each. Whereas a *yes/no* question generally rises in intonation at the end, an alternative question rises on each of the alternatives (or the first if there are only two) but falls on the last one.

Yes/No Question with Or

Alternative Question

A: Would you like coffee or tea?

A: Would you like coffee or tea?

B: Yes, please.

B: Coffee, please.

However, we need to understand that decontextualized generalizations about intonation offer no reason—only a rule. Couper-Kuhlen (2012) helps here by commenting on the intonation pattern of alternative questions:

...questions are produced in conversation as parts of courses of action carried out in real time and in this sense are interactional achievements. In fact, the rising pitch on the first alternative followed by falling pitch on the second (or last) alternative is not just some abstract rhetorical pattern but is motivated by differing degrees of epistemic certainty concerning the states of affairs under consideration. (p. 134)

In other words, even as a question is being posed, the certainty that a speaker has about an anticipated outcome can change. If there is no immediate response to the speaker's proffer of the first alternative with rising intonation, the speaker may propose the second alternative with more certainty (hence the falling intonation). Understanding the reason for this pattern may help ESL/EFL students to interpret it and respond correctly.

Lest we leave readers assuming that only near-identical alternatives can be conjoined, consider the following alternative question with different subjects:

Did you buy it, or did someone give it to you?

And even clauses with different tenses and subjects can appear as alternatives:

Did you buy it, or am I going to have to?

It is also possible to have an alternative question where the second of the two alternatives is an elliptical negative clause:

Did you buy it, or not?

In alternative questions, the degree of speaker irritation appears to increase with the amount of redundancy expressed in the second alternative:

Did you buy it, or not?

Did you buy it, or didn't you?

Did you buy it, or didn't you buy it?

Did you buy it, or did you not buy it?

According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), "the less elliptical the form, the greater the emotive meaning is likely to be" (p. 871).

ALTERNATIVE *WH*-QUESTION COMBINATIONS

While probably few ESL/EFL students will speak languages that have alternative questions of the type that we have just examined, they will likely be familiar with the kind that takes the form of a *wh*-question combined with an elliptical alternative question:

What would you like—coffee, tea, or milk?

Where do you live—in Queens or Brooklyn?

In many languages of the world, only this form of alternative question is permitted. Perhaps introducing this alternative *wh*-question hybrid first will ease students into the new forms of alternative questions that they will encounter most frequently in English.

Exclamatory Questions

An exclamatory question is not used for inquiry. Instead, it expresses surprise, delight, anger, exasperation, or other emotions. In writing, this type of "question" is usually punctuated with an exclamation point rather than a question mark. In other words, exclamatory questions

are associated with the exclamatory mood, not the interrogative mood. It is referred to as an *exclamatory question* because it undergoes subject-operator inversion, so its syntax is the same as a *yes/no* question:

Can she sing!

Was it hot!

According to Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985), exclamatory questions are like tag questions in that they invite confirmation (p. 811). Many exclamatory questions take the negative form, and they too convey the speaker's expectation of confirmation:

Isn't that amazing!

However, as Tsui (1992) notes, it is also possible to use exclamatory questions that do not seek confirmation:

Am I hungry!

Since such exclamations report a personal experience, they would be only acknowledged (e.g., *Dinner will be ready soon.*), not confirmed. Intonation at the end of an exclamatory *yes/no* question may rise or fall, although, according to Goedecke (1997), a rising intonation contour is more typical of North American English.

Another kind of construction is the exclamative, which resembles a *wh*-question, but which differs in several important ways. One is its syntax; it does not take subject-operator inversion. Second, in contrast to a *wh*-question, the exclamative only begins with *how* or with *what*. According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), *how* may modify an adjective, an adverb, a degree word, or a verb, and *what* occurs with NPs:

How kind you are to help!

How quickly things change!

How much effort we wasted!

How they hated each other!

What a lucky person you are!

What lucky people they are!

What luck you have!

Quite frequently, exclamatives are elliptical: *What fun! How cool!* As with a *wh*-question, the intonation contour falls at the end of an exclamative. Of course, the most important difference between an exclamative and a *wh*-question is that, as with the exclamatory question, the exclamative is not interrogative; rather, it manifests the exclamatory mood, as is obvious from the way it is punctuated.

Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions, both *yes/no* and *wh*-, are similar to exclamatory questions in that they are interrogative in form but not in function. They do not call for a response. According to Koshik (2005), such questions occur in a variety of conversational settings, ranging from news interviews to second-language writing conferences. What the questions in her data have in common is "that they are not asked, and are not understood, as ordinary information-seeking questions but as making some kind of claim or assertion, an assertion of the opposite polarity to that of the question" (p. 2):

Just because you've failed the first test, is that any reason to give up?

The speaker's message here is *Surely, no—that is no reason to give up.* The assertion is clearly negative. To make an affirmative assertion, a speaker would use a negative *yes/no* question. For

example, to encourage people to protest, an activist might pose the question, “Isn’t it time to do something?”

Ilie (1999) comments on the different functions of rhetorical questions in spoken discourse. In political speeches, they are used to manipulate opinion; in cross-examinations in courtroom trials, they tend to contribute to power manipulation when used by counsel and power challenging when used by witnesses; and on talk shows, they are mostly used to shape arguments and influence public opinion. Schaffer (2005) offers an additional, less weighty, function of rhetorical questions, what she calls the “rhetorical question as retort pattern.” In this pattern, the rhetorical question is a retort or answer to someone who has just posed a referential question; it answers the referential question in a way to emphasize that the answer should have been obvious. This use of rhetorical questions can be quite amusing, as in this retort, a *yes/no* rhetorical question indicating a negative answer:

Do chickens have lips?

Schaffer (2005) observes that *wh*-rhetorical questions as retorts are rarer, but here are two tokens from his data responding to A’s question, and again conveying a negative answer:

A: How reliable is he?

B: How shallow is the ocean? How cold is the sun?

In written discourse, Frodesen and Eyring (2007) point out that rhetorical questions can be used by a writer to introduce or shift a topic or to focus on a main point:

How much longer can we ignore climate change?

Because of their similarity in form, rhetorical questions can be confused with interrogative questions. Making students aware of the different question types may be helpful in this regard.

Conclusion

By comparing tag questions with alternative questions, exclamatory questions, and rhetorical questions, we have come full circle in our discussion of other structures that look like questions. Admittedly, some of these (e.g., alternative questions and question tags with rising intonation) are more interrogative in their function than others (e.g., question tags with falling intonation, exclamatory questions, and rhetorical questions). Nevertheless, they all share certain syntactic features with the *yes/no* questions and *wh*-questions that we discussed earlier.

We conclude by pointing out that ESL/EFL students will at least need to recognize the fact that although these structures look like questions, they do not necessarily function as queries; having learned the difference, students will be able to respond to them appropriately. As we saw in Chapter 11, analyses of foreigner talk discourse (Long, 1981) have revealed that questions are very common in native speaker conversation with nonnative speakers of English. In the analysis of his data, Long discovered that whereas statements made up 83 percent of the discourse among native speakers, questions of all types dominated foreigner talk discourse, where they accounted for 66 percent of all t-units.⁶ His analysis reveals that native speakers addressing nonnatives used significantly more alternative questions than they did with other native speakers.

Presumably, native speakers in conversations with nonnative speakers used more questions in an attempt to lighten the nonnative speakers’ interactional burden. However, from examples such as the following (excerpted from Long’s data),

Native speaker: Aha. Do you study?

or

Nonnative speaker: No.⁷

do you work?

it is clear that ESL/EFL students will need practice in learning to recognize what the speaker's intention is and in responding more appropriately on a pragmatic level to speakers' questions.

Teaching Suggestions

- Form.** After introducing your students to the concept of tag questions, you might focus their attention on the variety of tag question forms that exists in English. One way to do this is to divide the class into small groups. Give each group an envelope containing 40 pieces of paper. On 20, of them, you have written anchors, and on the other 20 you have written tags. Students have to match the anchor with the correct tag. Be sure to include a variety of anchors and tags with both negative and affirmative forms.
- Use.** Tag questions are typical of conversation, so one way to have students practice their use is in dialogues. By working with dialogues, students will also become acquainted with responses to tag questions. In constructing such dialogues, it would be wise to keep in mind some of the form-frequency patterns that Brown (1981) found in her study. Tag questions are overwhelmingly in the present tense, and they occur most often with the copula *be* or with the operator *do*. Most subjects are third person singular or second person, and 75 percent of all tag questions have an affirmative statement with a negative tag.

Hal: Hi, Sue. Good to see you again. It's a nice day today, isn't it?

Sue: Hi, Hal. It sure is. Say, you look good. You've lost some weight, haven't you?

Hal: I'm trying hard. What have you been up to?

Sue: I've been studying for my midterm exams in economics and calculus.

Hal: Wow! You take tough courses, don't you?

Sue: Yeah, but I enjoy the challenge.

- Form/Meaning.** To help your ESL/EFL students become familiar with the intonation pattern of alternative questions and to make them aware of the contrast between it and the intonation of syntactically similar *yes/no* questions, you can give your students a worksheet with 10 pairs of answers. Next, read a question and ask your students to circle the letter of the appropriate answer. In order to answer correctly, your students will have to recognize whether the question you are giving them has the intonation of an alternative question or a *yes/no* question. Here's an example:

Teacher reads out loud: Are you studying English or history?

Students circle correct reply: A. Yes, I am.

B. Just English now.

- Meaning.** You can give your students practice in producing alternative questions by giving them "breakfast menus" that you have prepared. For each category, there might be two or three items from which to choose; for example:

Cold Beverages: Orange juice

Grapefruit juice

Entrees: Scrambled eggs

Pancakes

Oatmeal

Hot Beverages: Coffee

Tea

Side Dishes: Hash brown potatoes

Bacon

Ham

Pairs of students take turns role-playing servers and restaurant customers. The server might ask a *yes/no* question, such as

Would you like a cold beverage?

or

Would you like orange juice or grapefruit juice?

or an alternative question:

Would you like orange juice or grapefruit juice?

Depending on the type of question, the customer would give an appropriate answer. For instance, if it was the *yes/no* question, the customer would reply,

Yes, please. I'll have orange juice.

If, on the other hand, the server used the intonation of an alternative question, the customer would answer:

Orange juice, please.

5. **Use.** After explaining what rhetorical questions are and providing a number of examples, ask your intermediate or advanced ESL/EFL students to find and bring to class one example of a rhetorical question from an advertisement, a published speech, or a transcript of an interview. Ask the class to decide why the speaker or writer used a rhetorical question. See if the students can figure out the implied answer for any rhetorical question that the speaker or writer does not answer.
6. **Use.** If possible, ask each student to record a conversation between him or her and a native speaker of English. Have the student pick out and categorize the different questions the native speaker uses. Are they all questions, or are some of them the constructions discussed in this chapter that only *look* like questions?

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. *Provide original example sentences that illustrate the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples.*
 - a. tag question
 - (i.) unmarked, confirming
 - (ii.) idiosyncratic
 - (iii.) marked
 - b. alternative question
 - c. alternative *wh*-question combination
 - d. exclamatory "question"
 - e. rhetorical question
2. *Why are the following sentences ungrammatical?*
 - a. *John wants to go, didn't he?
 - b. *Susan never laughs, doesn't she?
 - c. *He left, did not he?
 - d. *Is not that wonderful!
3. *What would the complete form of these utterances be?*
 - a. Is Janet blue-eyed, or-not?
 - b. Looking forward to vacation, aren't you?
 - c. Was it Bill or was it Bob who wrote this letter?

Test your ability to apply what you know.

4. The following have been produced by an ESL or EFL learner. What would you tell the learner?
- a. *We're going, isn't it?
 - b. *This is nice music, yes?
 - c. **Native speaker:** Would you like coffee or tea?
ESL/EFL student: *Yes.
5. Under what circumstances might an English speaker utter question 2 rather than question 1 in the following pairs? Discuss both options in your response.
- a. **1.** It is going to rain, isn't it? **2.** It isn't going to rain, is it?
 - b. **1.** Do you want to go, or not? **2.** Do you want to go, or do you not want to go?
 - c. **1.** You did, didn't you? **2.** You did, did you?
 - d. **1.** There isn't much to do, is there? **2.** There isn't much to do, is there?
 - e. **1.** Isn't that good? **2.** Isn't that good!
 - f. **1.** Max sings well, doesn't he? **2.** Max sings well, don't you think?
6. Explain why rhetorical questions such as Do you really want to be like everyone else? and Don't you have better things to do? are used in advertising.
7. If an ESL/EFL student asks you what the difference is between the following, how would you answer?

Open the door, won't you?

Open the door, will you?

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For the historical development of tag questions in English, see:

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- Tottie, G., & Hoffmann, S. (2009). Tag questions in English: The first century. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 37(2), 130–161.

For a corpus study of the difference in tag question use between fictional dialogues and conversation, see:

- Axelsson, K. (2011). *Tag questions in fiction dialogue* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

For exercises on intonation of tag questions and alternative questions, see:

- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D., & Goodwin, J. (with Griner, B.). (2010). *Teaching pronunciation: A course book and reference guide* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
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For pedagogical suggestions on how to work with rhetorical questions, see:

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Endnotes

1. It is possible in informal English to use *no* as a tag with an affirmative anchor: e.g., *We have homework today, no?* but not *yes* with a negative anchor.
2. Allerton (2009) notes that the traditional British use of *have* in a tag following an anchor with the possessive *have* (*Chérie has a chance, hasn't she?*) is no longer favored by younger speakers ("those under 60!"), who prefer to use *do* in the tag (*Chérie has a chance, doesn't she?*).
3. Dialect-specific lexical-type tags include the Canadian *eh* and the British *innit*.
4. This scale has been adapted from Givón (1993).
5. In her corpus study, Kimps (2007) found that in British English, tag questions with constant polarity most frequently questioned or challenged new or unexpected information (57 percent), though they also commonly sought verification (40 percent).
6. A *t-unit* is an independent clause and any subordinate clauses or nonclausal structures associated with it.
7. Utterances by two speakers printed on the same line indicates an overlap.

Introduction

The English articles (i.e., definite *the*, indefinite *a/an*, and unstressed *some/səm/*—as well as the use of no article at all) are part of a larger system of reference and determination that we continue to discuss in the next chapter. However, because of the learning difficulty and frequency of the articles,¹ we treat them as a separate topic before taking on the larger systems in which they function.

Articles are understandably problematic from a cross-linguistic perspective: most Asian and Slavic languages and many African languages have no articles. Even those languages that do have articles or article-like morphemes (e.g., French, Spanish, Farsi, the Scandinavian languages, and the Semitic languages) often use these morphemes in ways different from English. For example, many of these article-using languages mark the generic use of an abstract noun with their equivalent of the definite article. Thus, instead of saying *Beauty is truth*, as the English poet Keats did, the literal equivalent of this sentence in many of these languages would be **The beauty is the truth*.

Errors in article usage are common among ESL/EFL learners and often persist among learners at higher levels of proficiency. Research on ESL writing has found inaccurate article use to be one of the most frequent errors committed (e.g., Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Chandler, 2004). Teachers should be ready to encounter article errors of omission (e.g., *blue pen over there is mine*) and substitution (e.g., *Yesterday I heard the good joke*) from their students. A great deal of attention has been paid to these two basic types of errors, and a range of explanations for why they are made has been put forth (for a concise overview of patterns within these two error types, see Trenkic, 2009).

Articles not only present a challenge for learners, they also present a challenge for teachers. It may be easy to spot article errors, but it is no simple task to explain their corrections. Choosing the correct article is often based upon an intuitive judgment that is hard to explain. Although many ESL/EFL textbooks present guidelines and rules of thumb for article use, a teacher often does not have to wait long before one of his or her students has found an exception to a rule.

By presenting information on article form, meaning, and use, this chapter aims both to familiarize teachers with basic article guidelines and to prepare teachers for making sense of what look like exceptions to those guidelines. We begin with structural facts about articles. After examining their forms of pronunciation, we consider the classification of nouns upon which choices of article form depend. We also briefly consider the syntax of articles in relation to other determiners. We then explore the core meanings associated with the articles. Finally, we discuss a variety of article uses and connect these back to the core meanings.

Form: Structural Facts about Articles

PRONUNCIATION OF THE ARTICLES

Although the definite article has an invariant spelling, *the*, it has four different pronunciations. The two pronunciations that are most frequent and occur in normal speech in unstressed form are:

/ðə/ before a consonant sound² /ði/ before a vowel sound (/ðə/ also occurs)

the book

the apple

the unit

the orange

the song

the elephant

Emphatic use of the definite article is pronounced as stressed /ði/:

Citation: **The word *the* has four pronunciations.** (stressed /ðə/ or /ði/)

Emphatic: **I met **THE** Julia Roberts.** (the actress, not someone else with the same name) (stressed /ði/)

For the two forms *a* and *an*, the *n* sound in the second reflects the historical relationship of the indefinite article with *one*. The indefinite article realizes the form *a* before a word with an initial consonant sound and the form *an* before a word with an initial vowel sound:

/ə/ before a consonant sound³ /ən/ before a vowel sound

a book

an apple

a unit

an idea

a student

an ear

The stressed form of the indefinite article is /e/ and is usually a citation form:

The indefinite article is most frequently realized as *a* (/e/).

However, this stressed form may also occur as an emphatic or contrastive form in natural speech, as in the *Peanuts* cartoon script we cite later in this chapter (Not “A” dog . . . “The” dog).

The plural or uncountable counterpart of *a/an* is generally unstressed /səm/ when used as an article, as in the following sentence:

I went to the store and bought some apples and some rice.

This article function should be distinguished from three other determiner functions of *some* that are stressed:

Partitive/quantifier: **Some of the people left early.** (*some* = part of the set)

Emphatic: **That was some party!**

Presentative: **Some guy came to the door and tried to sell me a vacuum cleaner.**
(*some* = a certain one and often conveys negative affect.)

It should be noted that the regular unstressed pronunciation of articles poses a significant challenge for learners, who find it difficult to perceive articles, even though corpus studies have shown that *the* and *a* (*an*) are among the five most frequently occurring words in the English language, ranked first and fifth, respectively (Sinclair, 1991). For example, Pierce and Ionin (2010) found that L1 speakers of Korean and Mandarin made a number of transcription errors on a task where participants were able to listen to the same sentences multiple times. There was a tendency for *the* to be inserted in noun phrases in subject position and for articles to be omitted in noun phrases in object position.

CLASSIFICATION OF NOUNS

Most of the strictly form-based information about English articles depends on the English noun classification system. All English nouns are classified as either common nouns (e.g., *a boy, a country, a planet*) or proper nouns (e.g., *Bob Robertson, Denmark, Saturn*). In addition, all common nouns can be further classified as noncount nouns (e.g., *water, clothing, luggage*) or count nouns (e.g., *a beverage, a shirt, a suitcase*). Noncount nouns, sometimes called *mass nouns*, are singular in number for purposes of subject-verb agreement but cannot take the indefinite article and the plural inflection as common count nouns do:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Noncount</i> | <i>Count (singular)</i> |
| *a water, *some waters | a beverage, some beverages |
| *a luggage, *some luggages | a suitcase, some suitcases |

Noncount nouns and plural count nouns do, however, share the possibility of taking the zero article (i.e., no article at all) or indefinite *some*:

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Noncount</i> | <i>Count (plural)</i> |
| water | suitcases |
| some water | some suitcases |

Proper nouns are a special case: like common noncount nouns, they usually take the zero article and do not take the indefinite article; however, like common count nouns, they sometimes appear with the plural inflection. In the plural, they require the definite article to retain proper noun status:⁴

America, *an America, the (two) Americas (= North and South)
Mr. Wilson, *a Luke Wilson, the (two) Wilsons (= Luke and Owen)

While most singular proper nouns appear without an article, there are examples of some that do take the definite article, such as *the Mediterranean (Sea)* and *the Amazon (River)*.

A summary of English noun classifications and the article forms they may take are shown in the following chart, where Ø represents the zero article:

| | | | | | | |
|------------|--------|--------|----------|----------------------------------|--|-----|
| | Nouns | | | | | |
| | Common | | | Proper (are inherently definite) | | |
| | Count | | Noncount | sg. | | pl. |
| | sg. | pl. | | | | |
| DEFINITE | the | the | the | Ø | | the |
| INDEFINITE | a/an | some/Ø | some/Ø | | | |

The Count-Noncount Distinction

As noted above, the lexical classification of English common nouns into count and noncount nouns is an important step in making proper article choices. The conceptual distinction is problematic for ESL/EFL learners in that many languages make use of similar concepts; however, what is countable (and thus either singular or plural) and what is uncountable is somewhat arbitrary and varies to some extent from language to language. For example, *information* and *furniture* are noncount nouns in English but count nouns in French and Spanish, and *chalk* is a noncount noun in English but a count noun in Japanese. Also, even within English itself many nouns can be used either as count or noncount nouns, which is something we will discuss.

At a basic conceptual level, count nouns may be viewed as referring to objects, and noncount nouns as referring to substances. Radden and Dirven (2007) identify boundedness and internal composition as important criteria for distinguishing objects from substances. An object tends to be perceived as having discrete boundaries and a heterogeneous internal composition made up of different parts. If we take an *apple*, for example, we see a round shape and different parts (e.g., skin, fruit, stem, core, seeds, etc.). Substances, like *juice*, lack inherent boundaries and have a homogeneous internal composition. There are, however, noncount nouns in English that appear to violate the criterion of homogeneity. Category terms, like *furniture* or *jewelry*, although comprised of different objects or parts, are noncount nouns. Radden and Dirven remind us that it is possible to change our perspective on entities so that substances may be viewed as objects and objects may be viewed as substances. Pelletier (2010) speaks of a universal packager, which turns noncount into count nouns, and a universal grinder, which turns count into noncount nouns as in the following two sentences:

I'll have a juice.

When trying to make applesauce, we ended up with *smashed apple* all over the kitchen.

In the first sentence, the substance of juice has been packaged, given boundaries by a container (perhaps a glass). In the second sentence, the individual objects (i.e., apples) have been ground up, yielding a substance of indistinguishable parts.

Accepting that nouns can be count in one context and noncount in another is something learners are known to struggle with (Amuzie & Spinner, 2013; Butler, 2002; Yoon, 1993). An emphasis on perspective makes it easier to make sense of nouns that regularly appear as count nouns and as noncount nouns. Abstract nouns (e.g., *beauty, truth, crime, law, education*) often exhibit this flexibility. As noncount nouns, these nouns refer to abstract, general notions; as count nouns, they refer to a specific instance of the general notion. Consider the following uses of the noun *life*:

Life can be beautiful. (noncount)

The quick-thinking police officer saved a life. (count)

In the section on article use, we will see more examples of shifts in countability.

THE SYNTAX OF ARTICLES AND OTHER DETERMINERS

The definite article, like demonstratives and possessive determiners, is considered a core determiner and thus can optionally be preceded by one predeterminer and followed by one or two postdeterminers (recall that the upper limit on total number of determiners seems to be three):

| <i>Predeterminer</i> | <i>Core</i> | <i>Postdeterminer</i> | <i>Head Noun</i> |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| all | the | other | boys |
| | the | first, three | cars |

The indefinite article *a/an* has a more idiosyncratic distribution because it derives from a number (*one*). The following are some common patterns involving the co-occurrence of *a/an* with other determiners (see also Chapters 16 and 17):

- In measurements, in the sense of *each, every, per*:
60 miles an hour
twice a day
- After *what* and *such* and before singular nouns in exclamations:
What a day!
Such a nuisance!

3. Before the quantifiers *few* and *little* to impart a positive rather than a negative sense of quantity:
Jake has (a) few friends.
(A) little money was missing.
4. A necessary part of *lot of*, *number of*, *great/good deal of* when these are used as quantifiers:
a lot of energy
a (large) number of boats
a great deal of money

Meaning: Core Meanings of Articles

THE MEANING OF THE DEFINITE ARTICLE

The signals definiteness. Yet, there is disagreement as to what exactly definiteness is. Some accounts, following Russell (1905), emphasize the idea of a unique referent while other accounts, following Christophersen (1939), stress the speaker's and listener's familiarity with the referent. Use of the definite article in the following sentence (uttered in a kitchen as two people are preparing to bake cookies) expresses both uniqueness and familiarity:

Hand me *the* mixing bowl.

We can assume that there is one unique mixing bowl in this particular kitchen and that the person to whom this utterance is directed is familiar with that bowl. There are, however, uses of the definite article that are not so easily explained by uniqueness and familiarity. We will explore some of these later in the chapter.

Hawkins (1978) provides a useful perspective on definiteness. His "location theory" proposes that *the* serves as an instruction from the speaker/writer to the listener/reader to locate the referent in the same shared mental set of objects. In the example above, the speaker and listener share a set comprised of mental representations for distinct objects in the kitchen. From this set, it is possible for the listener to locate the one mixing bowl. Thus, *the* is a grammatical signal to identify a particular referent. Lyons (1999) defines definiteness as "the grammaticalization of identifiability" (p. 278).

According to Bolinger (1975), "the definite article . . . single[s] out (make[s] definite) the thing mentioned against the background of a more inclusive whole" (p. 181). Of course, an important question arises as to what the "more inclusive whole" is. Against what background is the referent to be identified? As pointed out by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the definite article "will not tell you how to identify it [the referent] – the information is somewhere around, where you can recover it" (p. 367). We will see that referents can be located against a variety of backgrounds. For example, the necessary information might be found in the immediate situation (as with the mixing bowl in the kitchen above) or it might be found against the backdrop of ongoing text (e.g., has the referent been mentioned previously in the conversation?). In the section on uses of the definite article, we will discuss these and other possible backgrounds for identification. What is consistent, however, is that *the* signals that a referent should be uniquely identified by the listener/reader. Under this account, both uniqueness and familiarity are relevant factors: the referent should be *unique* against a background with which the speaker/writer and listener/reader are *familiar*.

Hawkins (1978) notes a further aspect of meaning when the definite article is used with plural and noncount nouns. Inclusivity is the idea that reference is "to the totality of objects

or mass” (p. 160). For example, in the following sentences, all of the chairs in the front row should be turned and all of the snow should be removed from your boots:

Please turn *the* chairs in the front row.

Be sure to remove *the* snow from your boots.

This is sometimes called the *maximality principle* (Munn, Miller, & Schmitt, 2006).

The emphasis on identifiability reflects the origins of the definite article. *The* derives from the demonstrative signaling distance (i.e., *that*), where the demonstrative serves a deictic (or pointing) function. White (2010) suggests that once we identify an appropriate background, we can conceptualize *the* as maintaining a pointing function. Again, we will see examples of various backgrounds in the section of this chapter on uses of the definite article.

THE MEANING OF THE INDEFINITE ARTICLES

Rather than signaling identifiability, *a/an* signals the classification of a referent (Master, 1990). The listener/reader does not need to locate the unique referent among a shared mental set of objects. Instead, the indefinite article prompts the referent to be conceptualized as a member of a larger class. Consider the following sentence (uttered in the same kitchen previously mentioned):

Get me *a* spoon.

It is not important that the listener and speaker have the exact same referent in mind. The listener is free to choose any one spoon from the kitchen. With the above statement, the speaker is signaling that he wants one member from the class of spoons. Given the absence of unique identifiability, we can say that the referent is indefinite. That the indefinite article indicates a quantity of one reflects its historical origins from the numeral *one*.

When unstressed *some* is used with plural count nouns and with noncount nouns, we see the same function of classification:

Get me *some* eggs and *some* flour.

It is the class of eggs and the class of flour that are signaled by the choice of *some*. Notice that there is no inclusivity or maximality. Instead, a “fuzzy” quantity is implied. When unstressed *some* is used with plural count nouns, the meaning is somewhere between less-than-all and more-than-one; with noncount nouns, the meaning is an unspecified amount (Radden & Dirven, 2007).

The main distinction between *a/an* and *some* lies in the conceptualization of the referent. For *a/an*, an entity is conceived of as an object within a larger class of such objects. For *some*, an entity is conceived of either as a group of objects within a larger class of such objects or as a portion of a substance.

THE MEANING OF THE ZERO ARTICLE

We have seen that the indefinite and definite articles foreground referents against different backgrounds. *A/an* and *some* signal a background of like entities (i.e., a larger class). *The* signals a background of distinct entities (such as objects in a kitchen) from which the unique referent can be identified. According to White (2010), the zero article signals no background at all. Such a *sui generis* conceptualization can lead to interpretations of both indefiniteness and definiteness.

When used with noncount nouns and plural count nouns, the zero article, in the words of Christophersen (1939), gives the “impression of something continuous with indefinite limits” (p. 36). This impression is evident if we compare the following two sentences:

I need water.

I need some water.

Use of *some* in the second sentence imposes a limit on the quantity of water needed, even though the precise amount remains unspecified. The first sentence, however, sets no limits. There is no linguistic signal placing boundaries around the substance of water. The focus is on the quality of the noun, and the quantity is irrelevant (Christophersen, 1939). Both *some water* and *water* are indefinite, as the listener/reader is not required to uniquely identify the referents against a background of distinct objects shared with the speaker/writer.

Proper nouns appearing with the zero article are interpreted as definite. This traditional view is often based on the idea that proper nouns refer to unique individuals and that such uniqueness is sufficient for identifiability (see Lyons, 1999 for discussion of this point). If they refer to individuals and not sets, proper nouns do not need indefinite articles because there is no need to classify them within a larger set. If by definition they are unique, proper nouns do not need definite articles to signal that they are uniquely identifiable. The utterance “Michael Jordan” both implies a unique individual and fails to evoke a larger class of Michael Jordans. Just as with indefinite noncount and plural count nouns, \emptyset used with proper nouns prompts no foregrounding against a background. The referent is *sui generis*, or unto itself.

The Use of Articles

Article use is not simply an independent decision made by the speaker/writer, but rather a reflection of shared knowledge between the interactants in any act of ongoing communication. The speaker/writer must assess the interlocutor’s background knowledge and make a series of assumptions regarding the information that he or she shares (or does not share) with the interlocutor. Pica (1983) notes that in the sentence-level examples given in grammars and textbooks, *a* and *the* can often be interchanged without any loss of grammaticality; however, in natural data, she notes that communication breaks down when articles are used with reference to items that exist in one participant’s experience but not in the other’s. Here is an example we have found of the phenomenon that Pica discusses:

A: Where’s the dessert?

B: What dessert?

A: You were supposed to bring the dessert.

Differences in the perspectives or experiences of participants can also be a source of humor:

“Peanuts” cartoon:

Frame 1: Girl standing at front door with Snoopy says:

There’s a dog here who wants to come in.

Frame 2: Snoopy thinks:

Not “A” dog . . . “The” dog!

USES OF THE

Hawkins (1978) originally identified eight uses of the definite article for nongeneric reference. Liu and Gleason (2002) consolidate this classification scheme to include four uses: situational, textual, cultural, and structural. Their scheme was validated by García Mayo (2008), and we will adopt it here.

Situational Use

We have already seen an example of situational use, in which two interlocutors standing in a kitchen are able to identify one mixing bowl. Because of unique identifiability, speakers are able to use the definite article with the first mention of a common noun. Imagine a family sitting around the dinner table. One person says to another:

Pass me *the salt*, please.

The background for identification here is the set of things that are immediately perceptible. The listener can identify or single out *the salt* from other things that are sitting on the table: *the pepper*, *the bread*, *the water jug*, etc. At times, the referent may not be immediately perceptible:

Don't go in there. *The dog* will bite you.

In this situation, the listener may not be able to see the dog (and may not have previously known about it). Yet the use of the definite article alerts the listener that the present situation contains one potentially dangerous dog, which can be uniquely identified against the background of things that are *in there*.

Textual Use

Here the speaker/writer assumes that it is not the immediate situation, but rather the text or the ongoing discourse that allows for a referent to be uniquely identified. Textual use of *the* includes cases of anaphoric reference:

Fred left an important book on his desk this morning. He returned home in the afternoon to get *the book*.

The background for identification here is the set of things that have been mentioned in the prior text. The listener/reader is able to identify or single out *the book* from other things that have been mentioned: *Fred*, *his desk*, *this morning*. In traditional narratives, it is common to introduce participants with an indefinite article and to use the definite article or a personal pronoun for subsequent mentions of the same participant. As noted by Ariel (1990), the decision between *the* and a pronoun is one of accessibility. Speakers use pronouns for that which they consider to be more accessible to their interlocutors. Consider these examples from Epstein (2002):

- 1. There's a cat in the yard. It's eating a mouse.**
- 2. There's a cat in the yard. ?The cat is eating a mouse.**
- 3. There's a cat and a dog in the yard. The cat is eating a mouse.**

The second sentence in (1) is preferred, but the second sentence in (2) sounds odd because *a cat* has just been mentioned, making the referent highly accessible. This referent is less accessible in (3) because two entities have been introduced in the discourse. A pronoun in (3) is not appropriate because it would be unclear whether reference was to the previously mentioned cat or dog.

Textual use also includes cases of associative anaphoric reference:

I gave Fred a new book. He later told me *the author* was not his favorite.

We see the use of the definite article with a noun that is mentioned for the first time. The background for identification here is more than the referents in the previous text (*I*, *Fred*, *a new book*); the background includes things associated with those referents. Mention of *a new book* triggers the schematic notion that a book has a cover, pages, an author, a publisher, etc. The listener/reader is expected to identify or single out *the author* from among these things.

Epstein (2002) considers uses of *the* with first-mention nouns that do not exhibit anaphoric or associative anaphoric reference. For example, he notes the beginning of a conversation:

M: Did you hear about *the fight*?

A: What fight?

M: Between Bob and Grandpa...

Rather than referring back to something that has already been mentioned, *the fight* seems to refer forward to something that will be explained in the ensuing conversation. Epstein posits that such first-mention use of *the* “trigger[s] the interpretation that a discourse entity is highly prominent, i.e., that the entity plays an important part in the broader discourse context” (p. 349). This sort of opening (which is common in literature) has the effect of drawing the reader into the story, as if he or she were already familiar with the participants and locale.⁵ Notice the article use in the opening paragraph of William Faulkner’s (1931) *Sanctuary* (p. 3):

From beyond the screen of bushes which surrounded the spring, Popeye watched the man drinking. A faint path led from the road to the spring. Popeye watched the man—a tall, thin man, hatless, in worn gray flannel trousers and carrying a tweed coat under his arm—emerge from the path and kneel to drink at the spring.

Right from the beginning, the reader gets *the screen*, *the spring*, *the man*, and *the road*. Although Faulkner uses *the man* in lines 1 and 2, later in line 3, he refers to the same character with *a man* (using the indefinite article to classify). These uses of *the* are examples of speakers/writers manipulating the core meaning of the definite article—imposing familiarity onto a text that is about to be heard or read.

Cultural Use

Liu and Gleason (2002) consider cultural use to be use of the definite article “with a noun that is a unique and well-known referent in a speech community” (p. 7). Common examples presented in ESL/EFL textbooks are *the sun* and *the moon*, where the background for identification comes from general knowledge of the skies. The sun and the moon are unique and can be identified from among other entities such as clouds, stars, and planets. Notice that this set of objects shared among language users is made up of what we see in the skies with the naked eye. If we shift our frame of reference (i.e., the background for identifiability) to the universe, we can no longer talk about a unique sun and moon. Because there are many suns and moons in this larger background of the universe, it would be more appropriate to refer to *our sun* and *our moon*.

There are examples of cultural use that seem to challenge the importance of uniqueness and familiarity. Consider the following:

We listened to *the radio*.⁶

I talked to Burt on *the phone*.

The listener may not be able to identify the exact radio or phone in the sentences above. The same could be said of the following:

I’m going to {
the store/mall
the bank
the park
the library
the movies
the beach
}.

In such cases, the listener may well know, but does not need to know, the specific store, bank, and so on that is involved. To account for these examples, we might revisit the core meaning of the definite article. Against what backgrounds are the referents being singled out? Consider:

Zahra took the train to Boston.

Rather than identify a specific train, it seems the listener/reader is being asked to identify one mode of transport against the background of different modes of transportation. With *the radio* and *the phone* above, identification takes place against the background of different modes of communication. And with *the store* and the other similar examples, identification takes place against the background of different public or recognizable places. As we will see, this use of the definite article seems to approach generic reference—where one type or class is foregrounded against other types or classes.

Patterns of article usage are sometimes relatively fixed for given disciplines and topics, which is of some comfort to those who teach English for specific purposes. For example, in medicine, anatomy, and biology, two article patterns seem to be used for both specific and generic reference to organs of the body:

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Pattern 1 (the + singular noun)</i> (for singular body parts) | <i>Pattern 2 (the + plural noun)</i> (for plural or paired body parts) |
| the heart | the ears |
| the liver | the eyes |
| the stomach | the lungs |
| the bladder | the teeth |

For both these patterns, unique identifiability takes place against the background of the human body. There is one heart and one liver, just as there are two ears and two eyes to be identified from among other body parts.

The names of physical ailments and diseases, however, present a much greater learning problem because of the variety of article patterns and the singular and the plural forms they take; they run the whole gamut of article and noun number patterns, the only overlap being the option of using either pattern 2 or pattern 4 for certain diseases, e.g.,:

| | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Pattern 1</i> | <i>Pattern 2</i> | <i>Pattern 3</i> (a/an + sg noun) | <i>Pattern 4</i> (∅ + plural noun) | <i>Pattern 5</i> (∅ + noncount) |
| the flu | the mumps | a cold | mumps | pneumonia |
| the plague | the measles | a headache | measles | cancer |
| the gout | the bends | a hernia | bends | malaria |

Occasionally, the same disease has two different names occurring in two different patterns:

Pattern 1: **the flu**

Pattern 5: **influenza**

The name of a disease and its article and noun number usage pattern should be mastered as a lexical unit if ESL/EFL students are to avoid making recurring errors when they refer to ailments and diseases because no straightforward system underlies their usage. To assist in their learning, students can be encouraged to conceptualize different backgrounds for the various patterns. For example, patterns 1 and 2 signal unique identifiability of one type of disease against the background of other types of disease. Pattern 3 evokes the background of other instances of the same ailment (e.g., one cold among other colds). Patterns 4 and 5 may be considered to lack any background, the zero article offering a close-up view on the illness.

Use of *the* with some proper nouns can also be considered a cultural use. Common patterns include use of the definite article with certain names of public institutions (e.g., *the New York Stock Exchange*, *the Guggenheim Museum*, *the Apollo Theater*) and geographical names (e.g., *the Hudson River*, *the Atlantic Ocean*). As noted by Liu and Gleason (2002), however, which

names take the definite article appears to be largely a matter of convention. Consider the following list; the head noun is indicated in parentheses when deletion is possible:

regions: **the Caucasus, the Crimea, the Roussillon, . . .**

deserts: **the Sahara (Desert), the Mohave (Desert), . . .**

peninsulas: **the Monterey Peninsula, the Iberian Peninsula, . . .**

oceans and seas: **the Pacific (Ocean), the Black Sea, the Mediterranean (Sea), . . .**

gulfs: **the Gulf of Mexico, the Persian Gulf, . . .**

rivers: **the Mississippi (River), the Amazon (River), . . .**

canals: **the Erie Canal, the Suez Canal, the Panama Canal, . . .**

While *the* is used in the names of the previously given geographic bodies, it is not used in the names of the following:

continents: **Asia, South America, Africa, . . .**

countries: **Canada, France, Nigeria, . . .**

counties: **Nassau County, Cook County, . . .**

cities: **Dallas, London, Tokyo, . . . (exception: The Hague)**

mountains: **Mount Whitney, Mount Aetna, . . . (exception: The Matterhorn)**

lakes: **Lake Michigan, Lake Baikal, . . . (exception: The Great Salt Lake)**

islands: **Catalina Island, Staten Island, . . .**

points: **Point Dume, Point Mugu, . . .**

bays: **San Francisco Bay, Tampa Bay, . . .**

capets: **Cape Cod, Cape Canaveral, . . .**

parks: **Yosemite National Park, Douglas Park, . . .**

regions: **Appalachia, Alsace, Siberia, . . .**

streets, roads, avenues, boulevards, and so on: **Downing Street, Abbey Road, Wilshire Boulevard, Fifth Avenue, Rodeo Drive, . . .**

squares: **Trafalgar Square, Union Square, . . .**

For plural or collective geographical names, the following categories are relevant and are consistent with plural proper noun conventions, which require use of *the*:

countries (if viewed as unions, federations, collections of islands): **the U.S.A., the United Kingdom, the Philippines, . . .**

lakes (if they form a geological group): **the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes, . . .**

mountain ranges: **the Rocky Mountains (or the Rockies), the Alps, the Andes, . . .**

islands (if viewed as a group): **the Canary Islands, the Azores, the Bahamas, . . .**

With the exception of “regions,” geographical names seem to pattern fairly neatly according to their geographical features. As such, it may be helpful for learners to conceptualize geographical names that take the definite article as being identified against a background of other like features. For instance, *the Amazon River* evokes a background of other rivers, and *the Azores* evoke a background of other islands. Against these backgrounds, a unique referent is singled out.

We saw a similar conceptualization for *the* used emphatically with people’s names, as in:

I met THE Julia Roberts.

Here, Julia Roberts is used in a common noun pattern and evokes a class of other individuals with the same name. In this example, there is a set of Julia Roberts, one of whom—the famous actress—is uniquely identifiable.

In rare cases, it is possible for the same speaker to refer to the same entity as either a proper or common noun:

Proper: **Earth**

Common: **the earth**

Used as a proper name, “Earth” fits the same paradigm as the other planets in our solar system—*Mercury, Venus, Mars*, and so on; it is also used poetically or in personifications as a proper noun: (*Mother*) *Earth*. Used as a unique common noun, the earth relates to *the sun, the moon, the land*, and *the sea* as part of our immediately visible environment. Thus, speakers can have different frames of reference for one and the same entity, and they reflect this in their article usage.

Structural Use

Structural use is defined by Liu and Gleason (2002) as the use of *the* with first-mention nouns that are modified. Modification—in the form of relative clauses, prepositional phrases, and appositives—can come after nouns, and the use of the definite article in such contexts may be considered *cataphoric* reference (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999) or pointing forward, as we saw in the Faulkner quote earlier in the chapter. Consider the following sentences:

The person who called was rude.

I remember the beginning of the war very well.

The number seven is considered lucky.

The postmodification here provides information that enables the listener/reader to identify a unique referent: from among the set of people, one person called; from among the set of different stages of a war, there is one beginning; from among the set of numbers, there is one seven.

It should be noted that some learners overgeneralize and mistakenly equate any example of postmodification with use of the definite article (Butler, 2002). Students should thus be alerted to the fact that *a* may also be used with postmodified nouns. There is, however, a difference in meaning:

The person who called was rude.

A person who called was rude.

Given the definite article’s core meaning of unique identifiability, the first sentence suggests that only one person called, and this person seems to exhibit Epstein’s (2002) discourse prominence. With the second sentence, however, we can imagine multiple people calling, i.e., there is a class of people who called. *A person who called* is one member of that class and is not expected to be identified by the listener/reader.

This post-modified structural use can be found with names. In such cases, the names are no longer functioning as true proper nouns:

The George that called yesterday called again today.

In this example, we can imagine a background of Georges. It is the relative clause *that called yesterday* which enables the referent to be uniquely identified.

Modification in structural use may also come before nouns. Consider the following example of a first-mention noun with the definite article:

The first man on the moon was Neil Armstrong.

Unique identifiability is possible here because of our general conceptual knowledge and the description within the entire noun phrase. We understand that among a set of rankings, there is one first position, one second position, one third position and so on. The referent for *the first man on the moon* can be singled out against the background of a series of men on the moon. This general conceptual knowledge helps explain why the definite article often co-occurs with ordinals and superlatives.

Generic Use

Generic reference may be understood as that which refers to a kind (e.g., *the tiger is a ferocious animal*) or reports a general property (e.g., *a tiger eats meat*) (Krifka, Pelletier, Carlson, ter Meulen, Chierchia, & Link, 1995). Four patterns of article usage have been identified as expressing generic reference:

1. *the* + singular noun
2. *the* + plural noun
3. *a/an* + singular noun
4. \emptyset + plural noun/noncount noun

Here, we examine the two patterns with the definite article. The third and fourth patterns will be discussed later in the sections on indefinite article use and zero article use, respectively. The first pattern [*the* + singular noun] represents formal usage. It describes classes of humans, animals, body organs, plants, and countable inanimate objects that are presented as human inventions whose origins can be traced: *the gas lamp, the can opener, the laser, the computer*, and so on. It is not appropriate as a generic pattern for countable inanimate objects that gradually developed over time and are not thought of as having been invented: *the book, the window, the table, the chair*, and so forth.⁷ In a study of article usage in articles published in *Scientific American*, Master (1987) found that the first pattern [*the* + singular noun] was the one most likely to occur with noun subjects and to mark the topic of the essay; this pattern was also more likely to occur in first sentences of paragraphs and in introductions and conclusions of essays than elsewhere.

Stern (1977) found that the second pattern [*the* + plural noun] is the most limited of the four patterns with countable nouns. It usually expresses generic facts about human groups⁸ that have a religious, political, national,⁹ linguistic, social, or occupational/professional basis. Group affiliation is critical. This is not true of pattern 1, where science-based class membership rather than social group affiliation was found to be the main criterion. Thus, the following are not acceptable as generic statements (they are, however, acceptable as specific statements):

***The tigers are ferocious beasts.**

***The roses need water.**

***The pianos are splendid instruments.**

However, any of the other three patterns for countable nouns would produce acceptable generic statements for these examples. Pattern 2 is sometimes realized as [*the* + adjective], where the adjective acts as a noun and serves to identify a particular group of people: *the rich, the poor, the Swedish, the Chinese*, etc. It is interesting to note that inclusivity is not retained as part of the meaning when the pattern [*the* + plural noun] is used for generic reference, i.e., exceptions are allowed. For example, the statement *the Brazilians are good soccer players* does not require that every single citizen of Brazil play soccer well.

The definite article's core meaning of unique identifiability is maintained in both patterns 1 and 2. The referent (in this case a class) is identified from among other classes. Consider the sentences below:

The tiger is a ferocious animal.

The Brazilians are good soccer players.

In the first sentence, the class of tiger is foregrounded against the background of other classes of animal. In the second sentence, the class of Brazilians is foregrounded against the background of other nationalities.

USES OF A AND SOME

Nonspecific and Specific Use

With a core meaning of classification, indefinite articles can be used with both nonspecific and specific referents:

I am going to buy a house, but I haven't found one yet.

I am going to buy a house. It's on 13th Avenue.

In the first sentence, there is no specific house that the listener (or the speaker) can identify; in the second sentence, although the speaker has a specific house in mind, she or he presumes that the listener cannot identify it. The choice of *a* in both sentences classifies that which is going to be bought. In neither sentence does the speaker think that the listener could uniquely identify a particular house at the time of the utterance. The same motivation applies for use of *some*:

We should get some costumes for the Halloween party. Any costumes will do.

I bought some wine for the party.

In the first example, *some costumes* are nonspecific for the speaker and the listener, whereas *some wine* is specific for the speaker but nonspecific for the listener. What is important is that both *costumes* and *wine* are indefinite. The speaker presumes an inability by the listener to uniquely identify them.

That indefinite articles can be used with specific referents is an important point to make to students. Ionin, Ko, and Wexler (2004) have shown a tendency by some learners to mistakenly equate use of *a* with nonspecific referents and *the* with specific referents (e.g., **Jackie bought the new car*). Obviously, such a strategy for article use will produce inappropriate articles with indefinite specific referents. As Trenkic (2009) points out, learners should not assume *the* is used with any noun that they can identify in the real world, without regard for the discourse or the perspectives of the discourse participants. Learners need to consider the perspective of the listener/reader as well as the perspective of the speaker/writer.

Shifting Countability

As discussed earlier, indefinite articles can be used to turn noncount nouns into count nouns. With such a shift in countability comes a change in meaning or perspective:

| <i>Noncount (substance)</i> | → | <i>Count (unit or serving)</i> | |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| coffee | | a coffee | some coffees |
| chocolate | | a chocolate | some chocolates |

We can conceive of chocolate as a delicious non-individuated substance or as an individuated object that comes in a wrapper. We can also shift our perspective on mass or noncount nouns from generic substances to more specific types of that substance:

| <i>Noncount (generic)</i> | → | <i>Count (type)</i> | |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| cheese | | a cheese | some cheeses |
| tea | | a tea | some teas |

Often the same mass noun can occur with both of the above count noun interpretations, depending on the context; for example:

That café has some interesting teas. (types)

I'll have a tea with lemon. (serving)

Of course, many idiosyncratic meaning relationships involving noncount and count nouns must be learned independent of any such regular semantic shifts; in these cases, the meaning change is not predictable, so the combinations and their meanings must be learned as individual lexical items:

| <i>Mass</i> | <i>Count (singular)</i> | <i>Count (plural)</i> |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| air (the atmosphere) | an air (melody) | airs (mannerisms) |
| glass (the silicate-based substance) | a glass (beverage container) | glasses (spectacles) |
| iron (the metal) | an iron (for pressing clothes) | irons (golf clubs) |

Shifting Proper Nouns to Common Nouns

Indefinite articles can also be used to turn a proper noun into a common noun:

She met a John Smith yesterday.

The person whom she met is classified as one John Smith among a larger set of John Smiths. Personal names are not the only proper nouns that can shift to common noun use. Trade names often exhibit a metonymical shift, where the name of the company is used to refer to one of its products:

She drives a Mercedes (car).

I have a Cuisinart (food processor) at home.

He has a Galaxy (smart phone).

Please pass me a Kleenex (tissue).

Generic Use

The pattern [*a/an* + singular noun] is the most colloquial way of expressing a generality. One member of a class is representative of the entire class:

A dog makes a good pet.

This pattern can be used to express informal generalities for all semantic contexts except those where collectivity or group cohesiveness is being expressed. It should also be observed that because the focus is on one member, it is impossible to use this form for certain generic statements, such as:

***A dinosaur is extinct.**

The entire class of dinosaurs is extinct, not one representative member.

USES OF Ø

The zero article can be used in what appear to be indefinite and definite contexts. In fact, Master (1997), like Chesterman (1991) and Yotsukura (1970), distinguishes between two “zero” articles. One occurs with noncount and plural nouns (e.g., *milk, eggs*) and is referred to as the *zero article*, and the other occurs with proper nouns and certain singular count nouns (e.g., *London, lunch*) and is referred to as the *null article*. The zero article is claimed to be the most indefinite of English articles, whereas the null article is the most definite (Chesterman, 1991). Given what we believe is a common core meaning, we use only the term *zero article* for both contexts.

Use in Indefinite Contexts

As noted earlier, the distinction between Ø and *some* in indefinite contexts is one of quality versus quantity. Use of the zero article with noncount and plural count nouns puts the focus on the entity itself, not on an amount or number:

They saw fish at the aquarium.

If the speaker had instead said *some fish*, a “fuzzy” quantity of fish is implied. The distinction between \emptyset and *a/an* in indefinite contexts is one of perspective on the referent. Use of the zero article promotes a conceptualization of substance, whereas *a/an* promotes a conceptualization of object or type:

The boys ate (a) chicken.

He sells (a) cheese of uncommon flavor.

While we suggested above that the core meaning of indefinite articles was classification, there is a particular context in which the zero article serves that function as well. When a sentence subject in the singular is classified by a subject predicate, the correct article choice for the latter is *a/an*:

John is a teacher.

This is a pencil.

However, if the sentence subject you are classifying is plural, the appropriate article choice is \emptyset :

John and Bill are teachers.

These are pencils.

***John and Bill are some teachers.**

***These are some pencils.**

Use in Definite Contexts

As previously discussed, the zero article is often used with proper nouns. There are also times when \emptyset is used with common nouns in definite contexts. Master (1997) identifies three such occasions where \emptyset may be considered to alternate with *the*:

1. Mr. Phillips was appointed (the) treasurer

2. It usually snows here in (the) winter.

3. (The) Lunch was quite uneventful.

In each of these examples, *the* evokes a background for unique identification (e.g., different titles or positions, the four seasons, salient events for the speaker and the listener). Use of \emptyset puts the focus squarely on the referent by removing any instructions to the listener to identify it against a shared set of objects. As with proper nouns, identifiability is a given.

A similar thing happens when \emptyset is used with certain institutions. Where we might expect an article, none is used:

They're going to school/prison/church/temple . . .¹⁰

Hewson (1972) notes that the zero article with a singular common noun provides “an interior, qualitative view” of the referent (p. 106). It may help to conceptualize these nouns, when used without an article, as noncount. In the examples above, the focus appears to be on activity (such as studying, serving a sentence, worshipping,) rather than on any particular building or place. With an activity-oriented focus, the referents lack physical boundaries. This contrasts with a focus on the physical location, which would require the use of an article:

I'm going to a/the school. (I have an appointment with the principal.)

Generic Use

The pattern [\emptyset + plural noun/noncount noun] is the most common way of expressing generic reference (Biber et al., 1999). It can be used in almost all the discourse environments; in addition, it can be used to make generic statements about simple inanimate objects:

Books fill leisure time for many people.

Less formal than use of the definite article with a singular count noun, the Ø pattern ranges from semiformal to informal registers. The generalization is made simply by pluralizing and requires no abstract classification. As such, Radden and Dirven (2007) describe this pattern as conveying generalizations “based on vague, impressionistic judgments” (p. 109) and allowing for exceptions.

It should be noted that learners, when attempting to make generic statements, may at times inappropriately use the definite article with plural nouns and noncount nouns, as in:

***The amusement parks are fun.**

***The red wine is good for you.**

In some languages (like Spanish) these sentences would be grammatical. Thus, for some learners, such usage of the definite article could be considered a result of cross-linguistic influence from the L1. However, Ionin and Montrul (2009) suggest that learners whose L1 (e.g., Korean and Japanese) lacks such generic forms may also think that these forms are generic and equate them with their topic markers which are also used to mark nouns as generic. Teachers may want to stress that the use of [*the* + plural noun] for generic reference is highly restricted and that [Ø + plural/noncount noun] is the most frequent form.

Conclusion

Of course, much more needs to be said about article usage in English. We hope that this chapter provides a foundation. We discuss article usage again from time to time when it overlaps with other grammatical topics, as in Chapters 17, 23, and 35.

In other words, article usage cannot be compartmentalized. Articles are everywhere in English. As an ESL/EFL teacher, you must be prepared to cope with the varied learning problems that your students will have related to the use of articles. Focused instruction (i.e., systematic presentation in a hierarchy of manageable segments with meaningful iterative activities) can make a difference and can help learners improve their use of articles. In addition, Master (1995) recommends providing feedback on article usage in students' written work, having brief class discussions of article usage patterns, and asking students to keep records of their article errors. Although the article system in English is extremely complex, many aspects of it are teachable. In the teaching suggestions that follow, we provide some exercises that we have found to be useful.

Teaching Suggestions

- 1. Form.** To raise students' awareness of the pronunciation of the definite article, elicit the names of different animals. List these in two columns, depending on whether the animal name begins with a consonant or vowel sound. The columns might look like this:

| | |
|-------|----------|
| dog | elephant |
| cat | ostrich |
| sheep | ant |

Place *the* before each of the names. Then ask your students if there is any difference between the pronunciation of *the* in the first column and in the second column. You might read the columns aloud and emphasize a vowel distinction in the definite articles (e.g., /ðə/ *dog* vs. /ði/ *elephant*). It is worth drawing learners' attention to the fact that the two columns also prompt different forms of the indefinite article: *a* for the first, *an* for the second.

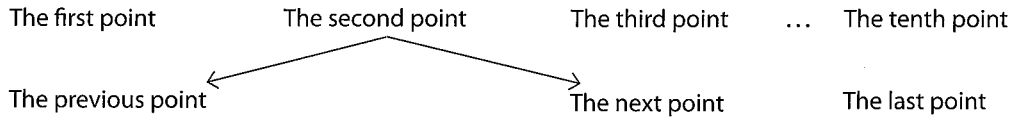
2. **Form.** Following Berry's (1991) suggestion to focus on perception of articles in addition to production, you can try simple dictation with your students. Read a variety of sentences that contain articles and ask your students to write down what they hear. In order to expose students to the most frequent article forms in natural speech, be sure to produce unstressed /ðə/, /ə/, /ən/, and /səm/.
3. **Meaning.** To practice the count-noncount distinction, Niemeier (2008) suggests an activity in which students plan a class trip. The particular focus is on food and what students would like to eat on the trip. After eliciting examples from the class (e.g., *oranges, bananas, bread, chocolate*, etc.), the teacher asks students to categorize the examples as count nouns or noncount nouns. For nouns that can appear in both categories (e.g., *chocolate*), students are encouraged to discuss differences in meaning and perspective when the item is viewed as a mass object versus when it is viewed as a countable object.
4. **Form/Meaning.** To practice classification with indefinite articles, try the following.
 - a. Use the indefinite article to classify objects in the room in which you are teaching. "What's in this room?" can be used as a lead-off question. Elicit responses that distinguish *a* from *an* and then the singular form from the articleless plural.

This is a(n)_____. (sg.) (orange, book)

This is a(n)_____. (sg.)/These are_____s. (pl.) (a book/books)
 - b. To stress normal indefinite noun usage—as opposed to the subject noun predicate usage shown above in suggestion 4a—have your students practice describing their possessions using *a/an* for singular nouns and unstressed *some* for mass or plural nouns.

I have a _____. What do you have? I have some _____. What do you have?
5. **Meaning.** Give your students practice interpreting the meaning behind articles with a modified cloze activity. As was done in Butler (2002), have your students fill in the missing articles and then explain their article choices. This should allow you to see if students are failing to consider the perspective of the listener/reader, confusing definiteness with specificity, employing faulty rules for article use, or exhibiting other problems (e.g., ignoring the count/noncount status of nouns).
6. **Meaning/Use.** Give your students practice in expressing generic usage with the zero article (especially abstract nouns) with the following activity, suggested by Wisniewska, Riggenbach, and Samuda (2007). Ask students to interview people about what they think is most important for achieving happiness. Prior to the activity, elicit from students or provide them with a list of possible abstract nouns, such as *love, romance, money, success, health, religion*. Discuss the appropriateness of zero article usage. Students then report their results to the class, monitoring themselves and being monitored by their peers for correct article usage.
7. **Use.** For article use with geographical names and features, try using world maps in the classroom. Students working in pairs or small groups choose a country or region and identify the salient geographical features in their chosen place. They then prepare a brief presentation on the geography of the country or region, giving special attention to accurate article use.

8. **Use.** Give your students practice in expressing generic concepts appropriate to different registers:
 Cue: elephant/gigantic
- Formal—*The elephant* is gigantic/a gigantic land mammal.
 - Less formal—*Elephants* are gigantic/gigantic animals.
 - Colloquial—*An elephant* is huge.
9. **Use.** Develop students' awareness of the article system at higher levels, especially for academic purposes, by studying texts from the students' disciplines together in class. This can uncover specific patterns of usage.
10. **Use.** H. Williams (personal communication) suggests that teachers of academic English spend some time teaching those common nouns or descriptions that are unique by definition and where *the* works practically 100 percent of the time:



By drawing a loop from one point back to that point, illustrate:

The same point

Show students that these “points” can be rhetorical as well as literal/mathematical, and that one can use these determiners with many other head nouns: *argument, example, draft, case, page, line, paragraph*, and so on.

Exercises

Test your knowledge of what has been presented.

1. Write an original sentence or two to illustrate the following terms. Underline the term in your example.
- common count noun
 - common noncount noun
 - proper noun
 - definite article (situational use)
 - definite article (textual use)
 - definite article (cultural use)
 - definite article (structural use)
 - indefinite article (classification)
 - ∅ article (generic)
 - shifting countability

(Test)

2. If your students produce the following, what norms of Standard English have they not followed?

- a. *The child has a milk on his shirt.
- b. *They gave us many informations.
- c. *I have big examination today.
- d. *Nowadays, personal computer isn't luxury anymore.
- e. *When I went to the Europe. . . .
- f. *I enjoy writing the poetry. It's my hobby.
- g. *My brother is student.

3. In what two ways can the following sentence be interpreted?

John is interested in buying a car.

4. Classify the following definite articles according to the classification system of Liu and Gleason (2002): situation use, textual use, cultural use, and structural use.

- a. Have you seen *the* film that just won the award for best picture?
- b. Let me have *the* check. It's my turn to pay. (spoken immediately after the waiter brings the check)
- c. I did a grammar course last year. My friend is going to do *the* course next year.
- d. When's *the* last time you really had a good time?
- e. Watch out for *the* rude fans. Sometimes they get out of control. (inside a sports stadium)
- f. I went to New York City last week. *The* traffic is awful.
- g. What is *the* governor doing about unemployment?

5. Explain the different speaker conceptualizations for the noun coffee in the following sentences:

- a. Coffee is a stimulant.
- b. I'd like a coffee, please.
- c. The coffee here is good.
- d. This café has dozens of different coffees.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

6. Each sentence below has been uttered by an ESL/EFL student. Give reasons for your corrections using concepts and terminology from the chapter.

- a. *"Blue pen over there is mine." (pointing to a table that has one blue pen and three black pens)
- b. *"Do we have a homework tonight?"
- c. *"Yesterday I heard the good joke. Let me tell it to you." (the listeners do not know what joke the speaker is talking about)
- d. *"The water is necessary for life." (attempting to make a general statement)
- e. *"Do you live near Mediterranean Sea?"

7. Find a short text and create a modified cloze activity by removing all the articles (including zero article) and inserting underlined gaps in their place. Give this activity to a range of individuals who are proficient speakers of English. Do the individuals insert all of the original articles? Do the responses differ from one individual to another? Ask your respondents to explain their article choices. This exercise should highlight the importance of perspective and conceptualization in article usage.
8. Have a friend (who is a proficient speaker of English) perform a role-play with you. Ask your friend to be a driving instructor. You are a complete novice driver and know nothing about cars. Sit side by side with your friend, as if you were sitting in the front of a car, and ask him or her to explain the different parts around you. You might begin by pointing to the area in front of your friend (where the steering wheel should be) and ask "What's this?" Listen carefully for the articles that are used. For example, does your friend respond with one of the following?
 - (This is) *the* steering wheel.
 - (This is) *a* steering wheel.

Is the same [article + noun] pattern produced for all the parts of the car? Point out to your friend the different patterns (or the one pattern) that was used and ask if he or she can provide an explanation. Try this with different people and see if there are different patterns and explanations.
9. Find two academic texts from different disciplines. Examine the patterns for generic reference in each text. Is there any noticeable difference in terms of frequency of patterns?

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Endnotes

1. Covitt (1976) did a survey of ESL teachers in the Los Angeles area in the mid-1970s and found that article usage was their number one teaching problem. We feel that this result would still be true today if the survey were repeated.
2. Note that this rule applies to the initial *sound* of the following word, not the initial *letter*, which may be a vowel letter representing a consonant sound as in *unit*, which starts with the letter u but which is pronounced as /y/.
3. See endnote 2.
4. Historically significant eras often take the definite article and pattern very much like plural proper names (i.e., the head noun is either plural or singular but semantically collective in meaning): *the 1990s*, *the Roaring Twenties*, *the War Years*, *the Great Depression*, *the Renaissance*.
5. This style may be somewhat regional; people from the South and some rural areas in the United States have a tendency to refer to objects and places and people in the presence of a newcomer as if they were already familiar to the newcomer.
6. Note that television is treated differently in British and American English. In British usage, we see a program “on the television (the telly),” but in American usage we see it “on television (on TV).”
7. Such simple inanimate objects, however, can be used with *the* by anthropologists or historians who present them as a significant invention: for example, “The wheel represented a step forward for this culture/mankind.”

8. On rare occasions, plants or animals will attain the necessary group status and affiliation to merit use of pattern 3:

Save the whales.

The redwoods must be preserved forever.

Such cases, however, appear to be exceptions.

9. Generally, the adjective form of a nationality is used with the definite article to function as the generic collective nouns in pattern 2 (e.g., *the Germans*). If the adjective ends in *n* or *i*, then a regular plural ending is added: *the Canadians, the Israelis, the Saudis*. If the adjective ends in a sibilant sound (e.g., *s, z, (t)ch, dge, sh*), no plural ending is added: *the English, the Chinese, the Welsh, the Dutch*. If the adjective ends in *-ish*, usually the stem minus the suffix is used with a plural ending to form the generic collective noun: *Polish/the Poles, Swedish/the Swedes, Finnish/the Finns*. However, "English" appears to be an exception to the *-ish* pattern in that we say "English/the English;" i.e., *the sibilant* pattern applies here perhaps because of the historical form of *the English* was *the Angles*, a Germanic tribe that settled in England in the 4th and 5th centuries C.E. Note that the French say "Les Anglais."
10. Note that *mosque* is an exception to this pattern. We would say, "I'm going to the mosque," not, *"I'm going to mosque," which suggests that English speakers classify *mosque* as a building (similar to their use of *cathedral, tabernacle*, etc.). However, we have been told that English-speaking Muslims are likely to say, "I'm going to mosque," so this may well be a matter of perspective.

Reference and Possession

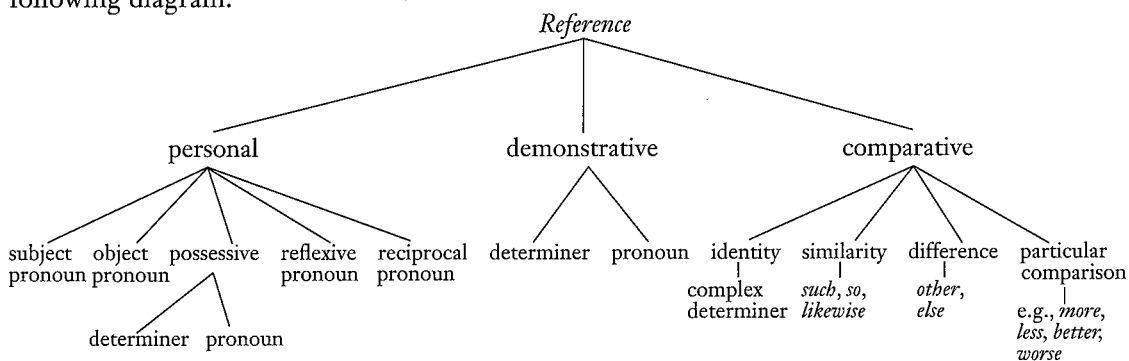
Introduction

In this chapter, we describe the forms, meanings, and uses of the grammatical resources that express reference and possession in English. Speakers and writers use referential forms, such as pronouns, demonstratives, and, as we saw in the last chapter, articles, to refer to people and things in the real world or to refer to something in the text itself. Possession can be expressed referentially via possessive determiners (*his* dog), possessive pronouns (the dog is *his*), inflectionally (the *man's* dog), or periphrastically (the dog *of the man who lives next door*).

When it comes to referential and possessive forms, ESL/EFL learners face challenges across the three areas of form, meaning, and use. Just to name a few of these, students need to learn to distinguish different discourse functions for *this*, *that*, and *it*; they may produce *he* when they mean *she* or vice versa; they may produce reflexive pronouns such as *hissself* instead of *himself*; and they may struggle to choose between inflectional (*'s*) and periphrastic (*of*) forms of the possessive. A greater awareness of the forms, meanings, and uses of referential and possessive forms should help teachers address these issues—and others—with their students. In this chapter, we will discuss each of these two major systems in turn.

Forms That Express Reference

Halliday and Hasan (1976) distinguish three types of reference in English: personal reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference. We examine each of the forms in the following diagram.



PERSONAL REFERENCE

The personal pronouns constitute the personal reference system in English.

Subject and Object Pronouns

The following are the subject and object forms of the personal pronouns in English:

| | Subject | | Object | |
|------------|---------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------|--------|
| | Singular | Plural | Singular | Plural |
| 1st Person | I | we | me | us |
| 2nd Person | you | you | you | you |
| 3rd Person | she/he/it (one) ¹ | they | her/him/it (one) ¹ | them |

The subject pronouns function as subject NPs; the object pronoun forms can function as indirect, direct, or prepositional objects:

indirect object direct object
I **gave** **her** **it.**
 (subj. pro.) (obj. pro.) (obj. pro.)

direct object object of the prep
She **returned** **it** **to** **me.**
 (subj. pro.) (obj. pro.) (obj. pro.)

When considering the syntactic form of pronouns, it is worth recalling the third phrase structure rule:

$$NP \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} (\text{det}^3) (\text{AP}^n) \text{N} (-\text{pl}) (\text{PrepP}) \\ \text{pro} \end{array} \right\}$$

Given that pronouns substitute for an entire NP and not for a simple noun, they regularly occur by themselves in NP position. That is, they do not take determiners, nor are they modified by adjectives.²

Possessive Determiners and Pronouns

The possessive forms of personal pronouns appear both as determiners and as pronouns:

This is Sheila's book. → **This is her book.** (possessive determiner)

This book is Sheila's. → **This book is hers.** (possessive pronoun)

Depending on whether it precedes a noun or stands alone as a pronoun, two different forms exist in all cases except the third person singular masculine form, which does not change:

| | Determiner Function | | Pronominal Function | |
|------------|----------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|
| | Singular | Plural | Singular | Plural |
| 1st Person | my | our | mine | ours |
| 2nd Person | your | your | yours | yours |
| 3rd Person | her/his/its one's | their | hers/his ³ | theirs |

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 5, the possessive determiners are core determiners, like the definite article and the demonstratives, and thus they can be preceded by a predeterminer and followed by a postdeterminer:

| | | | |
|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| pre | core | post | noun head |
| all | his | other | books |

The possessive pronouns, however, replace an entire noun phrase and can function as subjects or objects:

A: Hal makes excellent chili.

B: Really? Mine is pretty good, too.

subject

A: Do you like Joe's new car?

B: I prefer yours.

object

The *wh-*question word routinely associated with these referential possessive forms is *whose*; it is used most frequently as a determiner but occasionally occurs as a pronoun:

Whose (umbrella) is this?

It is not uncommon for nonnatives (and natives) to confuse the following two forms: *its* and *it's*. Only the former is a possessive determiner, whereas the latter is a contraction of *it* and *is*.

Reflexive Pronouns

Another major set of forms that function as personal reference pronouns are the reflexive pronouns:

| | Singular | Plural |
|------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| 1st Person | myself | ourselves |
| 2nd Person | yourself | yourselves |
| 3rd Person | herself/himself/itself oneself | themselves |

Notice that the above forms can be divided into two categories—those that are formed by combining *self/selves* with a possessive determiner: *myself*, *yourself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves*; and those that are formed by combining *self/selves* with an object pronoun: *himself*, *itself*, *oneself*, *themselves*. Obviously, *herself* fits both categories since *her* is an object pronoun and a possessive determiner. It is not uncommon for students to produce **hissself* and **theirselves*, forms which do occur in some dialects of English, and which are logical, given the paradigm.

When used in their underlying reflexive sense (we will see other uses later in this chapter), reflexive pronouns replace NP objects that have the same referent as the subject of the verb:

| | | |
|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| subject | | object |
| Sally | cut | herself. |
| ↑ | | ↓ |

This is why we said in Chapter 1 that in the sentence, *Steve said that Paul hurt himself*, the reflexive pronoun has to refer to Paul, who is the subject of the verb *hurt*, not Steve, who is the subject of the verb *say*.

Not all verbs that take reflexive pronouns in some languages do so in English, however. For instance, English speakers do not use reflexives for verbs that describe routines that people do for themselves (e.g., cf. **He shaved himself before his interview. He shaved before his*

interview.). Also, object pronouns, not reflexive pronouns are used after prepositions of place (e.g., cf. **He set his briefcase down next to himself. He set his briefcase down next to him.*).

Reciprocal Pronouns

Two other phrasal forms routinely used to express personal reference are the reciprocal pronouns, *each other* and *one another*. Like reflexive pronouns, both replace NP objects that typically refer back to NP subjects of the same verb, their *antecedents*. However, for these forms, the subject must be conjoined or plural NPs:

Jane and Donna respect *each other*.

The five children in that family helped *one another* throughout their lives.

DEMONSTRATIVE REFERENCE⁴

The demonstrative determiners and pronouns of English vary along two dimensions: proximity and number.

| | <i>Singular</i> | <i>Plural</i> |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------|
| <i>Near</i> | this | these |
| <i>Far</i> | that | those |

Like the possessives, the demonstratives can function as pronouns as well as determiners and can represent an entire subject or object NP. Thus, one can say,

Please fill { **this form**
these forms } out. (determiner function)

or, if the context makes the noun “form(s)” clear, simply say,

Please fill { **this**
these } out. (pronominal function)

Like the possessive determiners and the definite article, the demonstrative determiners are core determiners that can co-occur with a predeterminer and a post determiner:

| | | | |
|------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| pre | core | post | head noun |
| all | these | other | issues |

The *wh*-question word most closely associated with demonstratives is *which*; it can readily serve either a determiner function or a pronominal function:

Which (dress) did Margaret buy?

Sufficient context is required for the pronominal use to be interpretable. The singular demonstratives, in addition to functioning as pronouns and determiners, can function as adverbs, modifying adjectives or another adverb:

I would like you to build it *this* tall.

I can't believe they finished *that* quickly.

COMPARATIVE REFERENCE

A rather diverse set of forms comes together under the rubric of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) comparative reference. This type of reference includes forms that express identity, general similarity, difference, and particular comparison.

Identity

Comparative referential identity highlights the fact that a referent is identical to its antecedent. The main construction used to do this in English is a complex determiner comprised of the definite article collocated with *same*:

A young busker loitered on the corner.

The same young man had been there the day before.

The identical nature of the reference may be further intensified in the following way:

the exact/very same young man

the self-same young man

When “the same” functions pronominally, it usually substitutes for a member of the same class [or what Halliday and Hasan (1989) refer to as “co-classification”].

A: I'll have a hamburger and fries.

B: I'll have the same.

General Similarity

The referential forms expressing general similarity—*such*, *so*, and *likewise*—have different grammatical functions. *Such* is a determiner. As shown by the three different ways of continuing the dialogue started by speaker A, it can directly precede noncount nouns (B1) and plural count nouns (B2); however, it is unusual among determiners in that it must be followed by *a/an* when it modifies a singular count noun (B3):

A: Did you like Professor Grogan's lecture?

B1: No, such argumentation tends to bore me.

B2: No, such lectures bore me.

B3: No, such a lecture tends to bore me.

The referential form *so*, when used to express general similarity, is quite parallel to *this* when used adverbially:

Our table is $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{so} \\ \text{this} \end{array} \right\}$ long.

Both *this* and *so*, when used adverbially as referential forms, generally co-occur with some sort of physical gesture or demonstration on the part of the speaker.

Likewise is a referential adverb expressing general similarity; it often co-occurs with the pro-verb *do*, and together they refer to a previously occurring verb phrase:

Mrs. Allison made a generous donation to the Cancer Society. We were hoping you would do likewise.

Notice that *likewise* can be substituted for by *so* to show similarity. *So* as a pro-form can substitute for an affirmative clause and *not* can do so for a negative clause.

Do you want dessert? If so, let me know.

If not, I'll put the ice cream away.

Difference

The referential forms of difference are *other*—including its related forms (*the*) *others* and *another*—and *else*,⁵ and are frequent and important words in English. They tell the listener/reader that one speaker/writer is referring to some target item other than the antecedent:

Have you had a cookie? Yes? Have another!

I needed some help, and I couldn't find Ralph, so I looked for someone else.

In the first example, *another* is used referentially to mean “another cookie,” that is, something in addition to but different from the antecedent (i.e., *a cookie*). In the second example, *else* in combination with *someone* refers back to *Ralph* but means “a person other than or different from Ralph.”

Particular Comparison

The particular comparatives (e.g., *more*, *less*, *better*, *worse*, etc.) can be used like pronouns or adverbs to refer to something in prior discourse. In the following, *more* means “more coffee,” in addition to what the speaker has finished:

I finished my coffee. Amy offered me more.

In the next example, the response *better* means “I’m feeling better than before.”

A: How are you feeling?

B: Better.

Note that many of the comparative reference forms allow us to say something more elliptically and concisely; thus, we can avoid repetition.

INDEFINITE PRONOUNS

We conclude this section on the various forms of reference with indefinite pronouns. Even though these forms are not referential in and of themselves, they often serve as antecedents for referential forms or co-occur with referential forms like *else*. The indefinite pronouns occur as compound forms:⁶

| | <i>some</i> | <i>any</i> | <i>no</i> | <i>every</i> |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| <i>-body</i> | somebody | anybody | nobody | everybody |
| <i>-one</i> | someone | anyone | no one | everyone |
| <i>-thing</i> | something | anything | nothing | everything |

Notice that they all are written as single words except for the phrase *no one*. *-Body* and *-one* mean “person” in general. *-Thing*, however, refers to an inanimate or abstract concept, or to an entity not clearly identifiable as a person (e.g., “Shhh! *Something* moved.”). Whenever *one* is used to mean the cardinal number, however, an indefinite pronoun or compound no longer results. In this case there is a two-word sequence with the number *one* receiving stress. Compare:

Anyone could have gotten in free.

Any one of us could have gotten in free; the other two would have had to pay.

Meanings and Uses of Referential Forms

PERSONAL PRONOUNS: MEANING AND USE

Pronouns by themselves have little or no semantic content. As we stated at the beginning of the chapter, they are referential forms that point to people and things in the real world:

I am talking to you right now.

or to antecedents in text:

A guy walks into a bar. He orders a drink. When he gets it, he starts to tell a story.

In the first case, the pronouns serve a deictic function (pointing to a speaker and an addressee in the moment) and in the second, an anaphoric function (*he* pointing back to *a guy* and *it* to *a drink*). What should be clear in both examples is that context (or co-text) is crucial for figuring out what pronouns refer to. In other words, it is necessary to examine pronouns in use in order to understand their meanings.

First and Second Person Pronouns

Determining the referents for first person and second person pronouns is not always a simple matter. Although the referent for *I* is most often the speaker (or the author), multiple interpretations exist for *we*, as shown by Wechsler (2010, p. 333):

We are the champions! (unison) (speakers)

We want you to come to dinner. (speaker(s) + others)

Shall we go? (speaker(s) + addressees)

Can't we all get along? (speaker(s) + addressees + others)

The same first person plural form is used for different referents. Inclusive *we* includes the addressees, while exclusive *we* excludes the addressees. English speakers use the same pronoun for both inclusive and exclusive meanings, the only exception being the imperative *let's*, which has an inclusive meaning. Some languages, like those of the Malayo-Polynesian family, express such an inclusive-exclusive meaning distinction through two separate forms. Indonesian speakers, for example, use *kita* to mean *we* when the person addressed is included, as in

We should (all) go to the movies next Saturday.

whereas *kami* means *we*, excluding the person addressed:

Are we late? (addressed to person who has been waiting)

Studies of academic English have revealed different discourse functions performed by the inclusive and exclusive *we* forms. For instance, in a corpus of 36 scientific journal articles, Kuo (1999) found that the authors used the exclusive *we* mainly to explain what they had done in their research and to report their results, whereas the inclusive *we* was used to signal assumed common ground with the readers and the inclusive chunk *let us* was used “to invite readers to cooperate in the discourse” (p. 134). Examining four transcribed university mathematics lectures from MICASE, Fortanet (2004) found that the inclusive *we* was used for functions such as guiding the class through the lecture or presenting the audience new information with the chunks “we have...” and “we get...” The inclusive *we* was also used to refer to larger communities to which the speaker and audience belonged, such as Western civilization or humanity.

It is worth noting that in the two studies mentioned previously, the inclusive *we* was more frequent in lectures and the exclusive *we* more frequent in academic journals. This may say something about the differences between speech and writing. Speakers giving a lecture perhaps feel more pressure to signal cooperation with the audience (hence more use of the inclusive form); whereas authors composing a journal article feel less pressure to do this. However, Harwood (2005) points out that writers of research articles do exploit the fact that English does not distinguish between inclusive and exclusive *we*. Rather than using exclusive *I*, writers use inclusive *we* to make readers more receptive to the writers' claims. Based on his corpus study, Harwood recommends a phraseological approach to teaching academic writing: teaching common collocations with pronouns, such as “As we will see...”

Like *we*, *you* is used for different referents. It can refer to a singular addressee or to plural addressees:

Thank you for the gift. (conversation between two people)

Thank you for coming. (politician addressing a crowd)

Many L2-English speakers have told us that they find the presence of only one second person form for singular and plural reference to be disconcerting. Of course, English does have ways of explicitly signaling plural reference with the second person pronoun, such as use of the construction *you all*.⁷

Thank you all for coming.

or the informal *you guys*, which seems to be spreading to different contexts.

Given that some languages (like French or Russian) employ a singular second person pronoun form to mark intimacy and a plural form to mark formality, L2-English speakers may find use of only one form—*you*—to be too direct. Another potential source of confusion for ESL/EFL students is *you* used to refer to people in general:

I have got this little problem, you see. Sometimes I forget. And the trouble with “sometimes” is that you never know when to expect it. (newspaper extract in Biber,

Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999, p. 331)

Indeed, Myers and Lampropoulou (2012) have found that *you* is often used in social science research interviews as a kind of impersonal reference that does not pick out any particular person, but is the equivalent of *someone*, *anyone*, or *one*.

Third Person Pronouns

As a conversation or text unfolds, keeping track of the meanings of third person pronouns—to whom or what they refer—can require effort (Biber et al. 1999). Consider a brief narrative in which there are a number of different characters. The storyteller could use *he* and *she* many times to refer to different people. The listener or reader must be able to find the appropriate referent at each use of a pronoun. There may at times be ambiguity. For instance, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) offer the following sentence (p. 1496):

Liz told Jill that she was going to Paris ...

The most natural interpretation of *she* above is that it refers to *Liz*. However, it is not difficult to imagine someone misinterpreting the referent as *Jill*. Ariel (1988) acknowledges that in speech, stress plays a factor in signaling the intended referent. Given that pronouns are most often unstressed, stress on them, according to Ariel, signals that the marked or unexpected referent is the appropriate choice. For example, consider the following (where the word in all capital letters signifies that it is stressed):

Liz told Jill that SHE was going to Paris ...

Here, the referent would indeed be *Jill*.

Occasionally, third person pronouns point forward rather than backward to a referent in a text. Biber et al. (1999) offer the following extract from the start of a novel (p. 331):

It was the first dead body he had ever seen.

Such use is quite similar to first-mention non-anaphoric uses of the definite article discussed in the last chapter. The pronoun *it* at the start of the sentence imposes a sense of familiarity upon the reader.

There are other uses of *it* that break the traditional mold of a pronoun pointing to an antecedent that has previously been expressed in the form of an NP. For instance, it is possible that the antecedent is found in the meaning of a whole clause:

If you don't go while you have a chance, you'll regret it. (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 1458)

It above refers to the proposition of *you not going while you have a chance*. (Nonreferential and cleft uses of *it* are discussed in Chapters 23 and 30.)

Third person singular pronouns in English clearly mark gender: masculine (*he*), feminine (*she*), and neuter (*it*). This can pose a serious problem for students whose native language makes no such distinction. These students understand the use of *he* or *she/him* or *her*, of course, but since they are not accustomed to observing the distinction in their mother tongue, they often use the English third person pronouns inappropriately. Mere rule explication will do little to aid in this area; however, contextualized practice in using the various third person pronouns should help heighten student awareness. This same problem, of course, applies to the third person singular possessive and reflexive personal pronouns.

ESL/EFL students will have to learn that certain inanimate objects are sometimes referred to with a feminine pronoun form, although the use of *it* is more common today. This has been true for ships, countries, cars, and until recently, hurricanes, which now are given alternative masculine and feminine names and referred to as *he* or *she* as appropriate. Before the sex of an animal is known, often the masculine pronoun is used; however, once an animal or anything else has been given a gender-marked proper name, the appropriate feminine or masculine pronoun tends to be used.

Of course, the controversy continues as to whether or not it is sexist (or discriminatory) to use the third person singular masculine form when one intends to include both the meaning of *he* and *she*, as in:

When a person first arrives in a new country, he has many adjustments to make.

For now, this controversy will have to be resolved by each individual. Even if you yourself do not find such references offensive, you might explain to your ESL/EFL students that some people do and that stylistic alternatives are possible and often preferred. In place of potentially sexist *he*, the coordinated pronoun form *he or she* may be used:

When a person first arrives in a new country, he or she has many adjustments to make.

The form *he/she* (or *s/he*) may also be used in writing:

When a person first arrives in a new country, he/she has many adjustments to make.

It is possible to use antecedents and pronouns that are plural and thus gender neutral:

When people first arrive in a new country, they have many adjustments to make.

Some writers prefer to alternate their use of *he* and *she* across longer stretches of text. For instance, reference to an antecedent that is not gender specific will be signaled by *she* in one paragraph; in the following paragraph, *he* will be used for reference to another antecedent lacking gender specificity. It should be pointed out that these strategies apply not just to subject pronouns, but to object, possessive, and other forms of pronouns as well.

A more informal way of avoiding sexist language with pronouns is to use a singular *they/their*. Such use is widely accepted for reference to antecedents that are indefinite pronouns:

Everybody has their own way of doing things.

No one believes they can be happy all the time.

Common nouns may also be antecedents for singular *they/their*, as in the following examples from Huddleston and Pullum (2002, p. 4930):

The patient should be told at the outset how much they will be required to pay.

But a journalist should not be forced to reveal their sources.

Huddleston and Pullum observe that such examples⁸ are frequent in conversation but are avoided in formal writing.

Choosing between Subject and Object Pronoun Forms

In verbless or elliptical utterances, the object pronoun sometimes replaces the subject form, which would be expected in a complete sentence or in a partially reduced sentence with a verb form.

Who received the letter? { I received the letter.
I did.
Me.

In full sentences with the copula *be*, personal pronouns functioning as subject noun predicates used to take the subject form in formal English:

It is I.

This is she.

This usage is now changing even in formal English, and in informal English, the object pronoun is preferred:

It's me.

That's her.

However, the desire to use formal English and be "correct" has led some native speakers to use *I* even as a conjoined direct object or a conjoined object of a preposition.

?This concerns only you and I.

?The article was written by Nancy and I.

?Between you and I, he's a fool.

These forms are becoming colloquially acceptable, and they are occurring with ever increasing frequency even though they are prescriptively incorrect. Also increasing in frequency are object pronouns in conjoined subjects:

Me and Sally have known each other for a long time.

Her and Harry sure do make an interesting couple.

Biber et al. (1999) point out that such constructions are mostly limited to conversation and that the object pronoun most often occurs as the first element in the conjoined subject (p. 338). For more formal contexts and registers, subject pronouns are used:

Sally and I have known each other for a long time.

She and Harry sure do make an interesting couple.

Notice that *Me and Sally* has become *Sally and I*. Biber et al. observed a strong preference for first person pronouns in conjoined subjects to be in second position, whereas third person pronouns prefer first position.

Biber et al. (1999) also found object pronouns to appear regularly after *than* and *as*, again predominantly in conversation. It is important to note, however, that the subject pronoun is used if there is a subsequent verb:

Harry is much funnier than me.

Sally is as neurotic as him.

Harry is much funnier than I will ever be.

Sally is as neurotic as he is.

Biber et al. identify a similar preference for use of object pronouns in the construction *as/than* + pronoun:

Jim might be stronger than me, but I am faster than him.

We will not take up the meaning and use of possessive determiners and pronouns at this time because we deal comprehensively with the meaning and use of forms of possession in the second half of this chapter.

REFLEXIVE AND RECIPROCAL PRONOUNS: MEANING AND USE

A potential cross-linguistic problem derives from the distinction English makes between plural reflexive pronouns and reciprocal pronouns:

The children hit themselves. 

The children hit each other. 

Many languages (e.g., Spanish and Yoruba) can use virtually the same forms to refer to both the reflexive and reciprocal meaning and allow the context to disambiguate. Learners speaking such first languages may unintentionally produce English sentences such as the following:

***After ten years, she and Ted were happy to see themselves again.**

In a series of studies, Staczek (1986, 1987) made observations about uses of reflexive pronouns in English. First, the reflexive pronoun seems to be alternating with subject and object pronouns in ways that are not semantically reflexive:⁹

What about yourself?

(= you)

We expected yourself to take the lead.

(= you)

The text was first copyedited by my mother and myself.

(= me)

Mr. Dennison, Mr. Pappas, and myself have spent hundreds of hours . . .

(= I)

On behalf of myself and Delta Airlines, . . .

(= me)

From a syntactic view, such uses of reflexives are a form of asystematic variation, according to Staczek. They may at times reflect the speaker's or the writer's insecurity over whether to use the subject or object pronoun or a reflexive pronoun, or their desire to use a phonetically more salient form in juxtaposition with one or more proper names.

Second, Staczek (1988) looked at the variation in the use of the plural reflexives *-self/-selves* and suggests that increasing colloquial use of the *-self* forms as plural reflexives—which he documents (examples below)—is evidence that English is undergoing a change and that the now prescriptively required *-selves* forms may eventually be lost:

How we portray ourself influences the way we behave.

I'm sure many of you have played this head game with yourself.

We encourage people to give themself credit for the labor in remodeling.

As for the use of reciprocal pronouns, *each other* appears much more frequently than *one another* in both speech and writing (Biber et al., 1999). Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) explain that register is a factor: the more frequent *each other* is informal, while *one another* is the more formal choice. Another difference is that *each other* can have inanimate antecedents (e.g., *The houses face each other*), but *one another* almost always takes human antecedents.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS AND DETERMINERS: MEANING AND USE

Like personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns and determiners possess little semantic content and mostly function deictically or anaphorically. It is not surprising that, as Levinson

(2004) has noted, demonstratives often co-occur with a pointing gesture. Diessel (2006) stresses the communicative value of demonstratives and identifies two main uses for them (p. 470):

To bring a referent into current focus:

Look, *that's* Bill.

To differentiate referents currently in focus:

Here are two books. *This one is mine, and that one is yours.*

But how does a speaker know when to use *this* and when to use *that*?

Proximity is the traditional explanation for the meaning difference between demonstratives. *This/these* have a sense of “nearness” and *that/those* a sense of “distance.” The nearness or distance being conveyed could be spatial, temporal (*this* = now vs. *that* = then), psychological (*this* = more preferred vs. *that* = less preferred), or simply sequential (*this* = first mention vs. *that* = second mention):

Spatial: **I like *this* car better than *that one*¹⁰ over there.**

Temporal: **I like *this* movie better than *that concert* last night.**

Psychological:¹¹ **I like *this* candidate, which is why I didn't vote for *that one*.**

Sequential: ***This dress is less attractive than that one.***

In this explanation, the speaker determines the proximity of the referent and then chooses the demonstrative based on this determination.

Strauss (2002) offers a more dynamic and complex account for the use of demonstratives. For her, the key factor in a speaker's choice to use *this* or *that* is *focus*, which she defines as “the degree of attention the hearer should pay to the referent” (p. 135). More attention (or focus) is required for new information. Strauss proposes the following framework, which we have adapted somewhat:

| Form(s) | Meaning | Listener | Referent |
|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
| this/these | high focus | new information | important |
| that/those | medium focus | ↑ ↓ | ↑ ↓ |
| it/they/them | low focus | old information | unimportant |

Strauss (2002) analyzed a 45,000-word corpus of spontaneous speech for the uses of *this/these*, *that/those*, and *it/they/them*. She found *that/those* and *it/they/them* were used almost exclusively for anaphoric reference, 92 percent and 97 percent of their total uses respectively. This contrasted with 56 percent anaphoric use for *this/these*. The other uses of *this/these* included the following [examples from Strauss (1993, pp. 405–407)]:

Cataphorically (to point forward):

[a radio talk show]

Again we come back to *this*: Murder is the act of killing someone. . . .

Exophorically (to point outside the text at something):

[teacher is lecturing]

Yeah. The border states, specifically [pulls down map] we've looked at *this* before. . . .

Nonreferentially (to introduce or present new information):

Bee: They stuck us in *this* crazy building that they juh—they're not even finished with it.

The three non-anaphoric uses are all utilized to introduce a new referent or topic into the discourse. The choice of *this* signals to the addressee that the speaker is placing a certain level of importance on whatever is being introduced.

Another interesting pattern that Strauss (2002) found in her oral data was that *this/these* occurred as determiners 56 percent of the time and as pronouns 44 percent of the time, whereas *that/those* occurred as pronouns 72 percent of the time and as determiners only 28 percent of the time. Strauss feels that this reinforces her analysis of *this/these* as high-focus, new-information signals where the whole noun referent tends to be mentioned; however, *that* is more like *it* and occurs more often pronominally to signal a lower degree of focus and a greater degree of shared information.

A preference for using *this/these* as determiners (instead of as pronouns) was also found in a corpus study of academic written English. Analyzing 52 research articles (totaling over 200,000 words of text) from journals in two different disciplines, Gray and Cortes (2011) found similar results for both disciplines. From the field of applied linguistics, *this/these* appeared as determiners 79 percent of the time and as pronouns 21 percent of the time; from the field of materials and civil engineering, *this/these* appeared as determiners 83 percent of the time and as pronouns 17 percent of the time. When the demonstratives were used as pronouns, they almost always had antecedents that were larger or more extensive than noun phrases, as seen in one of the examples from the engineering discipline provided by Gray and Cortes (p. 38):

For all NDT methods, the sensitivity decreases with increasing strength levels; this can affect the variation coefficient of the estimated strength, for HSC cores 105.

The underlined section above is the antecedent for *this*. When used as determiners, *this/these* were found to occur frequently with shell nouns. Gray and Cortes, following Schmid (2000) and Flowerdew (2003), define shell nouns as “abstract nouns used to sum up, or encompass, detailed information in an efficient manner” (p. 36). Such nouns like *analysis, method, model, finding*, etc. appeared in more than 40 percent of the instances of *this/these* used as determiners.

Frodesen and Eyring (2007) point out that it is important to understand how the demonstratives and personal pronouns interact with the articles. They give the following examples to show that these forms are often equally grammatical choices, but that the choice depends on the speaker’s or writer’s intentions or what she or he expects the listener/reader to know (p. 123):

Oh, I’ve heard $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{that joke} \\ \text{the joke} \\ \text{it} \end{array} \right\}$ before.

Norm told us $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{those jokes} \\ \text{the jokes} \\ \text{them} \end{array} \right\}$.

With the following two example sets, Frodesen and Eyring show that demonstratives give the referent more emphasis (or “focus” as Strauss says) than use of an article or pronoun:

I heard a speaker on campus *this* afternoon . . .

(1) *The speaker/she* was talking about communicating effectively in the workplace.

(2) *This speaker* was the best I’ve heard on the topic of workplace communication.

More emphasis is placed on the speaker in (2); in (1) the focus is not so much the speaker but what the speaker was talking about:

I’m not sure if I’ll type my paper myself . . .

(3) If I do, *it* will probably take all day!

(4) I have more important things to do than *that*!

The *it* in (3) gives less emphasis to the antecedent—type my paper myself—and more to the fact that it will take all day; the *that* in (4) gives the antecedent more emphasis, which is

reinforced by the sentence-final position of *that*, which also conveys the negative psychological angle that we mentioned earlier.

The other point that Frodesen and Eyring (2007) make is that personal and demonstrative pronouns are often used to avoid repetition and wordiness when antecedents are in adjacent clauses:

I asked my instructor if I needed to submit a bibliography with my draft.

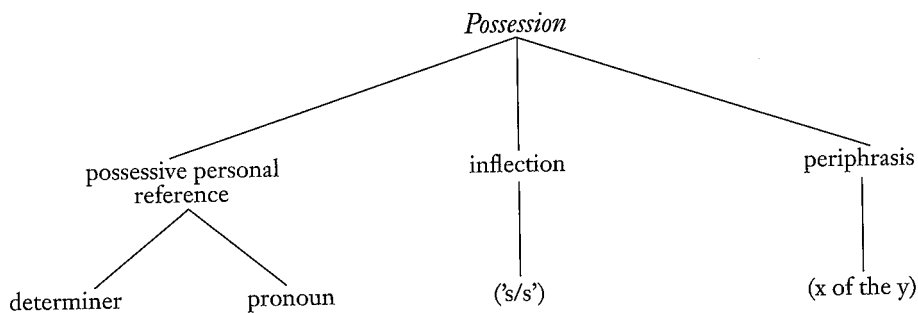
She told me { **that**
?the bibliography } **would be unnecessary.**

This research paper is one of the best I've written. I'm sure my classmates will

enjoy { **it**
?the research paper }.

Possession

It is time now to turn to the second major system in this chapter, that of possession.



POSSESSIVE FORMS¹³

In addition to the possessive determiners and possessive pronouns discussed earlier, as part of reference, there are two other major ways of signaling possession in English. In writing, the first is by inflecting singular nouns and irregular plural nouns not ending in *s* with 's:

the baby's crib **the women's room**

For regular plural nouns, an apostrophe is added after the *s*:

the boys' trip

For singular nouns that end in *s*, there is growing acceptance to add 's:

Bess's house **Kansas's climate**

However, it is not uncommon to see the inflectional possessive for such nouns expressed without the final *s*:

Bess' house **Kansas' climate**

The apostrophe added to regular plural nouns does nothing to alter the pronunciation of the word (*boys* is pronounced the same way as *boys'*); however, the addition of the 's to singular and irregular plural nouns is realized in speech as /s/ when it occurs after voiceless nonsibilants, /z/ when it follows voiced nonsibilant consonants and vowels, and /əz/ after sibilant consonants (i.e., /s/, /z/, /ʒ/, /ʒ/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, and /j/):

Mac's /mæks/

Sam's /sæmz/

Grace's /gresəz/

The other way of signaling possession is by using the periphrastic *of* possessive form where the possessor and thing possessed are inverted if one compares this order with that of the inflected 's form.

the man's name → the name of the man

From the example above, you might infer that the 's possessive and *of* possessive forms are interchangeable. This is not usually the case, as you will see below when we discuss this contrast again under the use of the possessive.

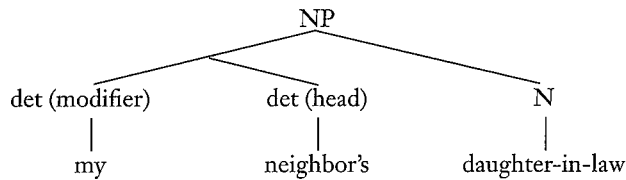
When the nouns involved are relatively short, double possessive inflections are possible:

Bob's brother's car

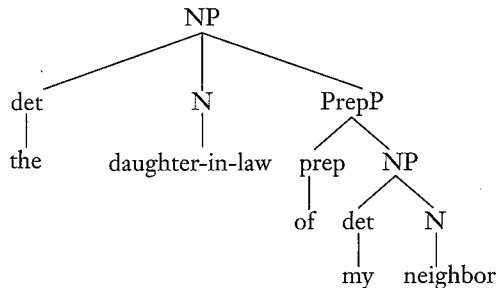
Double and even triple periphrastic possessives are also possible, regardless of whether the nouns involved are long or short:

the cover of the folio of the sonnets of Shakespeare

Syntactically, we treat a noun inflected with the possessive 's as a determiner, which may take its own determiner (creating a complex determiner):



The periphrastic possessive with *of* is generated as a noun phrase with a prepositional phrase following the head noun:



One of the most interesting structural facts about the possessive inflection is that it may be an inflection on complex or compound noun phrases as well as on simple nouns:

the mayor of San Diego's car

Sally and John's new baby

Another interesting fact about the 's possessive form is that, like possessive pronouns, the noun that follows the inflected noun may be deleted if it can be inferred from context:

Where is your car?

It's being repaired, so I borrowed Ted's. (i.e., Ted's car)

It is also possible for the 's possessive and the *of* possessive to occur in the same construction, sometimes called the *double genitive*:

a colleague of Jim's

these poems of Art's

These mirror similar constructions with 's and possessive pronouns:

a colleague of his

these poems of his

THE MEANING OF POSSESSIVE FORMS

What does the “possessive” inflection or form mean? As we will see, the ’s inflection, sometimes called the *genitive case*, and possessive pronouns are used to express a number of different referential meanings. To make better sense of these meanings, let us start at a somewhat abstract level. Cognitive linguistics views possession as a link between two things or entities. One entity serves as a reference point for the other entity (Langacker, 1999). In the example *Sophie’s bicycle*, we identify or conceptualize *bicycle* through reference to *Sophie*.

Two main types of reference have been identified for the genitive. Biber et al. (1999) propose the terms *specifying* and *classifying*.¹² Specifying genitives help answer the question *Whose X?* or *Which X?*

Sophie’s bicycle the child’s book

By specifying whose, *Sophie’s* and *the child’s* are clearly acting as determiners. They allow us to pick out which *bicycle* and which *toys*. In contrast, classifying genitives help answer the question *What type of X?*

a children’s book several women’s universities

The ’s inflections above act less like determiners and more like modifiers, resulting in constructions which behave like compound nouns. In fact, they are so much like compound nouns that it sounds odd to insert an adjective: **several women’s elite universities*. The adjective would instead be placed before the classifying genitive: *several elite women’s universities*.

At a less abstract level, the following are some of the meanings that may be expressed by the possessive inflection and possessive pronouns:

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| • Possession: | John’s car | her book |
| • Agency/Source: | Shakespeare’s sonnets | his ideas |
| • Human Relationships: | | |
| a. kinship: | Bob’s cousin | my father |
| b. professional: | Joe’s teacher | their doctor |
| c. other social: | Anne’s neighbor | your girlfriend |
| • Traits (Physical or Other): | Sue’s eyes | her ego |
| • Representation: | John’s portrait (= a portrait of John) | his statue (= a statue of him) |
| • Evaluation: | the project’s importance | its value |
| • Named After: | St. Paul’s cathedral | |
| • Location: | Maine’s coastline | |
| • Time: | tomorrow’s meeting | |
| • Measurement: | an hour’s wait | |
| • Subject + Nominalized Verb: | the earth’s rotation (= the earth rotates) | his actions (= he acts) |
| • Object + Nominalized Verb: | the planet’s discovery (= somebody discovered the planet) | her arrest (= somebody arrested her) |

This list does not exhaust the meaning potential of possessive inflections and forms in English (See Peters & Westerstahl, 2013). The construction is highly ambiguous from a semantic perspective since a phrase such as the following can mean several different things:

John's portrait

possession: **the portrait that John owns**

agency: **the portrait that John painted**

representation: **the portrait of John**

In most cases, the context will help disambiguate the intended meaning.

Although the *of* construction may be used to express many of the same meanings above, it is not always interchangeable with the possessive inflection. This contrast will be covered below. For detailed treatment of the preposition *of* see Chapter 21.

THE USE OF POSSESSIVE FORMS

A problem in using possessive forms may arise for learners whose first language has grammatical gender. English has notional gender, which means that the gender of the possessive determiner or pronoun agrees semantically with the gender of the possessor:

Paul lost his book.

Paula lost her book.

In some languages with grammatical gender (e.g., French, Spanish, etc.), the possessive determiner agrees grammatically with the object possessed. Thus, in French one says:

Paul/Paule a perdu son livre.

'Paul/Paula has lost his/her book'

Livre is a masculine noun in French, and the possessive determiner *son* must agree with the possessed noun *livre* regardless of whether the possessor is Paul (M) or Paule (F). This is an initial problem for learners to sort out if their first language has this type of grammatical gender.

Also, although all languages have a way of signaling possession, they don't all regard the same things as possessable. In Spanish, for example, one refers to parts of the body using the definite article, whereas in English, we would use a possessive form. Compare:

Spanish (literal translation): **I have broken the leg.**

English: **I have broken my leg.**

Thus, one of the areas you may have to work on with your students is to help them become familiar with those semantic or lexical domains where the English possessive forms normally occur.

The Use of Inflected versus Periphrastic Possessives

How should learners know when to use the 's construction and when to use the *of* construction? After all, there are plenty of instances where either form appears to be acceptable:

The works of Shakespeare fill an enormous volume.

Shakespeare's works fill an enormous volume.

Biber et al. (1999) note that the *of* construction is more frequent than the 's construction. But what factors can learners take into account beyond overall frequency?

One approach is to ask learners to examine the type of reference of the modifying noun, in the examples above, *Shakespeare* or *Shakespeare's*. Biber et al. (1999) suggest that the 's construction is preferred for modifying nouns that refer to humans, whereas the *of* construction is preferred for modifying nouns that refer to concrete things. Kreyer (2003), in

his study of a subcorpus of 45,000 words taken from the British National Corpus, found this to be the case. He identified a strong preference for 's with proper nouns and an even stronger preference for *of* with non-personal inanimate reference (for example, nouns like *chair* and *table*). To illustrate this preference, we performed quick Google searches for the following phrases and found these results:

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| "John's abilities" | 11,600 |
| "the abilities of John" | 268 |
| "the building's exits" | 41,500 |
| "the exits of the building" | 516,000 |

Learners might consider this as the human factor. We are likely—though not required—to use 's for nouns with human reference,¹³ or at least animate nouns, and to use *of* for nouns with reference to nonhuman inanimate things.^{14, 15}

A second factor in choosing between the 's and *of* constructions is the length of the modifying noun phrase. Biber et al. (1999) show that although one-word modifying noun phrases favor the 's construction, modifying noun phrases of three words or more strongly favor the *of* construction. Consider how the first example sounds better than the second:

the story of terribly unhappy Alexander
?terribly unhappy Alexander's story

Learners can be encouraged to choose *of* for longer modifying noun phrases. It is also worth pointing out that the type of modification matters. In his subcorpus, Kreyer (2003) found that post-modification in the modifying noun phrase was found exclusively in the *of* construction.¹⁶ One would more likely expect to hear:

the main character of a story that is widely popular

than to hear:

?a story that is widely popular's main character

It should be acknowledged that there are times when only one form is appropriate. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) identify a number of cases where inflectional 's cannot be used, such as in the expression of type, quantity, and depiction (p. 477):

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| the two kinds of shrub | *shrub's two kinds |
| the glass of red wine | *red wine's glass |
| the painting of the haystack | ?the haystack's painting |

Biber et al. (1999) point out the existence of certain idioms that require inflectional 's, such as *death's door* and *for heaven's sake*. They also observe that classifying genitives and genitives of measurement resist the *of* construction (p. 306):

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a ship's doctor | ?the doctor of a ship |
| several women's universities | *several universities of women |
| an hour's time | *time of an hour |

The difference between the 's and the *of* genitive is perhaps the most widely studied of all contrasts; in fact an entire special issue of a journal has been devoted to the topic of "genitive variation" (Payne & Berlage, 2014a). Many factors appear to play a part, although as we have seen, animacy and length seem to be the most influential (Rosenbach, 2014). It has also been established that the use of the 's genitive with inanimate possessors is spreading over time, although the effect of strength of animacy is variable across varieties of English and is in more advanced in American English than British English (Rosenbach, 2014). Yet, Jankowski and Tagliamonte (2014), in their study of Canadian English (as spoken in Toronto), found that the animacy factor was still obligatorily marked, i.e., human possessors are marked with 's and *of* genitives are used with inanimates. It is also possible that modality

makes a difference with speech favouring the 's variant in the interest of processing economy (Hinrichs & Szmrecsanyi, 2007).

Social Uses of Possessive Determiners

We do know from work by Staczek (1994) that at least two possessive determiners, *your* and *our*, are used in nonliteral, socially motivated ways in spoken English in a variety of settings. It seems that speakers try to identify with and engage their listener(s) through special uses of *your* and *our*. Staczek provides the following examples:

You get your fan, your temperature gauge . . . These are your fog lamps in the front.

[Volvo salesman to potential customer]

The chicken is not your real hot Mexican food. [chef to TV audience on PBS cooking program]

Here's a look at your local weather. [local meteorologist on the All Weather Channel]

We're gonna go ahead and put our fertilizer down. [radio gardening expert to caller]

What are we going to do with our certificate of deposit? [bank officer to customer]

In most of these cases, the possessive determiner can be paraphrased with either a definite article or no article at all.¹⁷ Staczek notes that he has found such uses of *your* and *our* in instructional settings, sales/marketing situations, scripted TV comedies, weather forecasts, and even in fifteenth-century cookbooks [*“and cover them with thy lids and let them bake . . .”* (p. 12)]. We feel that nonpossessive pronominal forms (especially *we*) can also be used similarly:

How are we today? [doctor to patient]

The use of *we* in the preceding sentence and of *our* in the bank officer's question above, respectively, can sometimes be perceived by the listener as condescending speech on the part of the user, i.e., the bank officer and doctor appear to be treating the bank customer and the patient like children. Where the speaker clearly has the right to instruct someone or demonstrate something (i.e., the gardening expert), the use of *we/our* and *your* seems less condescending and more in the nature of building informal relationships.

Conclusion

The English pronoun system is not as complicated as that of many other languages. Nevertheless, there is considerable detail for your students to master in learning the forms, meanings, and uses of the pronoun system and of the other referential forms. Having two forms for the possessive or genitive also causes problems for learners. Your job will require that you give your students continued exposure and meaningful practice to aid them in their learning and use of these forms.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form/Meaning.** A good way for children to practice the possessive determiners with parts of the body is to play “Simon Says” and to amplify the game with questions. For example:

Teacher: Simon says, touch your head.

Teacher: What did you (sg.) do? / What did you (pl.) do?

Student 1: I touched my head. / We touched our heads.

or

Teacher: What did he do?

Student 2: He touched his head.

2. **Form.** To draw learners' attention to the pronunciation of the possessive 's form, present them with small cards. Each card should display a different phrase that uses the possessive construction. Be sure to include multiple examples of the three different pronunciation patterns for 's (/z/, /s/, and /əz/). Ask students to organize the cards into three columns and to explain why they have done so. You can always give them hints to help them get started. The resulting columns should represent the three different pronunciation patterns. This activity provides an opportunity to discuss the articulatory process of voicing and to distinguish voiced from voiceless phonemes.
3. **Meaning.** Kealey and Inness (1997) suggest the following activity for practicing the meaning of possessive forms used with physical traits. Students are each given a sentence with possessives in it and are asked to memorize it (individually, in pairs, in groups—depending on the size of the class). The sentences are all descriptions of a child's face. The students are given a sketch of a family portrait with the child's parents clearly depicted but with the child's face missing. They have to circulate around the room and tell each other their sentences in order to complete the child's face and thus the family portrait (pp. 80–83). Sample sentences: *He has his mother's hair. He has his father's eyes. He has his mother's chin.*
4. **Form.** A substitution drill may be useful for demonstrating and practicing the correspondence between possessive determiners and pronouns. It would be desirable to have the examples be authentic.

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|------------------|
| Your book is red | → | Yours is red. |
| My book is blue. | → | Mine is blue. |
| Our classroom is small. | → | Ours is small. |
| Their car is black. | → | Theirs is black. |

5. **Use.** Give your students a passage in which the possessives followed by head nouns have been replaced with a blank line and two NPs in parentheses. Have them write the correct form of the possessive on each line, inflectional or periphrastic, explaining why they made the choices they did. For example:

Last Saturday I went shopping. It was (1) _____ (my friend/birthday) and I wanted to buy a gift. I drove (2) _____ (my father/car) to town. When I arrived, I realized (3) _____ (the shopping district/the center) was already quite crowded. . . .

6. **Meaning.** To practice distinguishing *his* and *her*, Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988) suggest giving learners a black-and-white sketch of a boy and girl. The boy and girl are similarly dressed (in T-shirts and shorts). Each learner should have a small box of crayons. The teacher then gives a series of commands (learners are told not to look at any sketch but their own): *Color his hair red; color her hair brown; color her shorts green; color his shorts black; and so on.* When the exercise is finished, the learners can compare their results.
7. **Use.** Students can gain practice in the use of third person pronouns in writing through this simple revision exercise. After writing a short story, students: 1) highlight all third person pronouns, 2) identify the antecedent for each of these pronouns, and 3) draw a line from each pronoun to its antecedent. This activity allows the teacher to point out cases where the reader may be likely to misinterpret the intended antecedent for various reasons such as intervening noun phrases between the pronoun and the antecedent (e.g., *I like dolphins and horses. They live in the sea.*).

8. **Form/Meaning.** As a way of introducing students to the syntactic and semantic elements inherent in the use of the reciprocal pronoun *each other*, M. Bedell (personal communication) suggests the following procedure.

Teacher: (introduces a sentence) I saw Albert.

(Teacher asks a student to reverse the action.)

Student 1: Albert saw me.

(Teacher asks another student to combine the two sentences.)

Student 2: I saw Albert and Albert saw me.

Teacher explains that whenever we have two sentences that are the reverse of each other, we can avoid the repetition by conjoining the subjects and using *each other* as a substitute for the objects;

Albert and I saw each other.

The teacher then provides several other sentences that the students can (a) reverse, (b) combine, and (c) paraphrase with *each other*;

Phil hit George. Sally likes Sam.

9. **Use.** To explore different uses of demonstrative determiners and pronouns, provide students with a piece of academic writing. Students 1) highlight all instances of *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*, 2) explain why they think the author chose to use a determiner or pronoun in each instance, and 3) why they think the author chose *this/these* over *that/those* (or vice versa) for each instance.
10. **Use.** Frodesen and Eyring (2007) present an exercise that asks students to choose between *it, the* + noun phrase, demonstrative determiner + noun phrase, and demonstrative pronoun. Parenthetical information is meant to help guide students' choices. Here is the first item in the exercise (p. 124):

1. I read [an article reporting on a survey about American's ideas of comfort foods].

_____ discusses how women tend to prefer snack-related comfort food like candy and chocolates while men prefer meal-related comfort foods such as pasta or casseroles.

(Put focus on the new information in the second sentence, not the referent.)

Such an exercise provides students practice in choosing among referential forms in discourse.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide your own sentences to illustrate the following terms. Underline the word(s) illustrating the term:

a. subject pronoun

b. object pronoun

c. possessive pronoun

d. possessive determiner

e. demonstrative pronoun

f. demonstrative determiner

g. reciprocal pronoun

h. reflexive pronoun

i. indefinite compound pronoun

j. singular "they"

k. 's possessive

l. of possessive

(Test 1)

2. Explain the ungrammaticality or awkwardness of the following sentences:
- ?The train conductor checked the mysterious and handsome foreign traveler's ticket.
 - *Him and she are going to Akron next weekend.
 - *This *Time* magazine is mines.
 - *There's no one here besides I.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

3. We have already seen how the indefinite pronoun *one* can mean "everyone" in a general sense, as in

One never knows who real friends are until times like these.

What other pronoun (or pronouns) in English can also more informally mean "everyone in general"?

4. In this chapter, we have mentioned the objection some people raise these days to using the third person singular masculine pronoun in reference to people of both genders. Many people reject the solution of using slash lines, as in *his/her* or *s/he* because they feel it is stylistically awkward. Aside from creating a new neuter pronoun, which is a solution some have suggested, what are other acceptable ways of circumlocuting the usage of *he*, *his*, and *him* when these forms are used in a general sense?
5. What would you tell students who produced the following:
- *The friend who helped me organize the picnic's house is on the corner.
 - *He kicked hisself for not remembering her name.
 - *This is Mary bicycle.
 - *Everybody from all the classes are going.
 - *Leo and Hugo hit themselves, and Hugo got injured.
6. Second language morpheme acquisition studies have found that the 's possessive form was supplied far less accurately than many other morphemes in obligatory contexts by ESL/EFL students (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Larsen-Freeman, 1976). We have already mentioned several reasons why the 's form causes problems for learners. Can you think of any other feature(s) of this structure that would account for its frequent misuse or omission?
7. In English, there are constructions called noun compounds, which consist of two nouns juxtaposed to create a compound word. The noun in attributive position functions much as an adjective would; for example:
- jewelry store table leg stone wall**
- As Andersen (1979) points out, the Spanish construction for both the English 's possessive form and noun compound is often the same:
- possessive—Milly's garden—el jardín de Milly**
noun compound—a baseball player—un jugador de béisbol
- Given these facts, what sort of problems would you expect a Spanish speaker to have with English 's possessives? What two types of errors involving the possessive form in English would you expect these learners to commit?
8. One of your students heard a native speaker of English say, "This prize was given to Edgar and I." Your student asks you if this sentence is okay. What will you reply?

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Endnotes

1. The personal pronoun *one* is a formal, general third-person pronoun that neutralizes the gender distinction in *she/he* or *her/him*. Since it is formal, it occurs less frequently than the other personal pronouns.
2. See Huddleston and Pullum (2002, pp. 429–430) for exceptions, such as *lucky you*, *he who laughs last*, and *just them*.
3. For all practical purposes, there are no possessive pronouns *its* and *one's*. The possessive determiners *its* and *one's* in the following sentences do not have pronominal counterparts.

The cat is going to eat its dinner.

***This dinner is its.**

One should take care of one's health.

***Regarding health, one should take care of one's.**

The acceptable version in the pair on the right is more typically British than American. In American English, we would more likely say “One should take care of his health” or—to avoid sexist language—“People should take care of their health.”

4. Halliday and Hasan (1976) also include the definite article *the* (which derives etymologically from *that*) and the pro-adverbs (i.e., pro-forms that replace and refer to adverbials) *here*, *there*, *now*, and *then* as part of demonstrative reference.
5. *Else* has a related adverbial form *elsewhere*, which is used to direct the listener or reader away from the antecedent and to some other place or condition: *If the answer to the problem isn't in the back of the book, you'll have to find it elsewhere.*

6. These indefinite “pronouns” are not true pronouns; syntactically, they behave much like regular nouns and take adjectives and prepositional phrases: *a certain someone, somebody with a gun*. There are also related indefinite pro-adverbs:
- somewhere/someplace anywhere/anyplace nowhere/noplace everywhere/everyplace**
7. See Biber et al. (1999, p. 330) for other ways to signal second person plural reference.
8. While increasing use of singular *they* may feel like a recent phenomenon, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) point out that it has been around since Middle English. (12-14th centuries C.E.)
9. Other semantically nonreflexive uses of reflexives are for emphasis (1) and used adverbially to mean “alone,” “without assistance” (2):
1. **John himself will tell you the news.**
 2. **The child wanted to solve the puzzle by himself.**
10. The nominal substitute *one* (pl. *ones*) often co-occurs with referential determiners to avoid repetition of lexical nouns. For more information on the nominal substitute *one*, see Halliday & Hasan (1976, pp. 91–105).
11. See Cornish (2001) for an excellent discussion of the psychological domain (or modal aspect) of demonstrative determiners and pronouns.
12. Other terms have been used, such as *defining vs. classifying* (Declerck, 1991) and *determiner genitive vs. attributive genitive* (Rosenbach, 2007).
13. Not all possessive constructions follow this tendency. For example, a Google search for “John’s actions” received only 47, 700 compared to 121, 000 for “the actions of John,” possibly because *action* is an nominalized verb.
14. This guideline, however, may not be as useful today as it once was. Diachronic studies (e.g., Rosenbach, 2007) have shown a historical shift toward more use of inflectional ’s with inanimate modifying nouns.
15. Kreyer (2003) also found a strong preference for the *of* construction with collectives (e.g., *government*) and lower animals (e.g., *ants*) (p. 186).
16. Payne and Berlage (2014b) discuss the “semantic niche” that the oblique genitive occupies. An oblique genitive takes the form of *the friend of John’s*, as opposed to *John’s friend* or *the friend of John*.
17. Staczek (1994) notes the opposite pattern also may occur: the definite articles can be used where the possessive determiner is expected: *I forgot to buy the wife a gift* (p. 14); however, he gave no explanation or analysis for this use.

Partitives, Collectives, and Quantifiers

CHAPTER

17

Introduction

Being able to communicate the quantity or amount of something is an important human need that we satisfy through language. If we need to be precise, we can refer to quantities by using numbers of various types:

Cardinal number: **We have class for two hours a day.**

Fraction: **I have to leave in (a) half an hour.**

Percentage: **Fifty percent of the class was out with the flu.**¹

Multiplier: **They have offered to double my salary if I join their firm.**

But due to the importance of this concept, we employ many other linguistic devices for quantification besides numbers. To illustrate this, here is a partial inventory of the different linguistic means that English speakers use to express *approximations* of quantity (based on Kennedy, 1987).

- First of all, we have terms in each of the four major parts of speech:
 - Nouns: **average, estimate, neighborhood, vicinity**
 - Verbs: **say, guess, verge on**
 - Adjectives: **(50)-odd, inexact, approximate**
 - Adverbs: **approximately, roughly, nearly**
- Then, too, minor parts of speech can be used to give an approximation of quantity:
 - Prepositions: **about, around, near**
 - Determiners: **some (50)...**
- Affixes:
 - Suffix: **(50)-ish**
 - Prefix: **quasi-universal**
- Phrases:
 - Conjoined prepositional phrases: **from (50) to (60), between (50) and (60)**
 - Lexicalized phrases: **more or less, or so, or more, or thereabouts, something like, within a hair's breadth of, within spitting distance of, at (the) most, on the order of**
- Clauses:
 - If you said (50), you wouldn't be far wrong.**

This chapter examines three linguistic devices relevant to quantification: a *partitive* denotes a part of a larger whole, a *collective* denotes a collection of individuals, and a *quantifier* denotes number or amount.

Partitives: **the best part of**

Collectives: **group**

Quantifiers: **almost all**

Each device provides challenges for ESL/EFL learners. Idiomatic partitives (e.g., *a clove of garlic*, *a loaf of bread*) represent an area of the lexicon with tight collocational restrictions (i.e., only certain nouns fit in the construction after the partitive noun) and must be learned individually. Partitive constructions that include numbers can be tricky for students to get right. For instance, although *fifteen of the states* is acceptable, *fifteen of states* is not. Partitives can also be problematic when it comes to the issue of agreement. In particular, errors in verb agreement may occur when partitives are used in subject position:

***A box of delicious doughnuts are on the table.**

The verb in the sentence above should be in the singular form, as it should agree with the head noun *box* and not with *doughnuts*.

Like partitives, collectives also raise questions about agreement. Which sentence below should students consider as correct?

The team is struggling at the moment.

The team are struggling at the moment.

The answer is not as straightforward as it is for partitives as we will see later in this chapter.

Quantifiers present a host of further challenges. Some of these concern the countability of the noun being quantified:

many cups ***much cups**

much water ***many water**

Others concern the definiteness (or lack thereof) regarding the noun being quantified:

most cups ***most of cups**

most of the cups ***most the cups**

And still others involve significant semantic distinctions among quantifiers:

There's a little water. So we should be fine.

There's little water. So we may not be fine.

It is not uncommon for ESL/EFL learners to produce something like the following:

?There's little water. So we should be fine.

In this chapter, we explore the above challenges, as well as other factors related to the form, meaning, and use of partitives, collectives, and quantifiers.

Partitives

A *partitive* is a construction that denotes a part of a whole. Its phrasal form typically consists of a count noun followed by *of* followed by another noun.

(det) noun of noun

a grain of salt/sand

The same pattern can be used to quantify or limit noncount nouns:

(det) _____ of _____ e.g., **a drop of water**
 [partitive noun] [noncount noun] **two drops of water**

and to delimit the quantity of count nouns:

(det) _____ of _____ e.g., **a deck of cards**
 [partitive noun] [count noun] **two decks of cards**

Partitives can modify both nonspecific nouns:

I need a deck of cards to show you my new magic trick. (any deck—nonspecific)

and specific nouns:

Will a deck of these cards do?²

When the partitive noun is part of the subject, the verb agrees with it. If the partitive noun is singular, the verb is singular. If the partitive noun is plural, the verb is also plural:

A mountain of dirty laundry was piled up after our vacation.

Mountains of dirty laundry were piled up after our vacation.

In order to capture the array of common types of partitives, we group them by categories (although some may overlap).

- Precise measure phrases (Many ESL/EFL students are more familiar with metric measure phrases):

a gallon of gas

a yard of fabric

two cups of sugar

two spoonfuls of cough syrup

- Container-based:³

a bottle of catsup

a jar of jam

two cartons of books

two cans of oil

- Portion-based:

a slice of bread

a dollop of whipped cream

two helpings of potatoes

two servings of ice cream

- Individual members of a category (of course, more than one can be referred to when a number is used):

a word of advice

an item of information

two pieces of luggage

two articles of clothing

- Parts or fractions:

a segment of society

a tenth of the population

two portions of the budget

two sections of the newspaper

- Shape of:

a ball of yarn

a column of smoke

two streams of water

two sticks of butter

- Pair of:

Some plural count nouns without a singular form are viewed strictly as pairs—things having two equal parts—and the partitive count noun *pair*⁴ is used with these nouns; for example:

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------|---|--|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| a pair of | } | <table style="border: none;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">trousers</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">scissors</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">tongs</td></tr> </table> | trousers | scissors | tongs | *a | } | <table style="border: none;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">trouser</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">scissor</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">tong</td></tr> </table> | trouser | scissor | tong |
| trousers | | | | | | | | | | | |
| scissors | | | | | | | | | | | |
| tongs | | | | | | | | | | | |
| trouser | | | | | | | | | | | |
| scissor | | | | | | | | | | | |
| tong | | | | | | | | | | | |

- Idiomatic partitives:

Vegetables

Other food items

a head of { **lettuce**
cabbage

a bunch of grapes

an ear of corn

a loaf of bread

a stalk of celery

a clove of garlic

a sprig of parsley

Animals

a herd of cattle
a flock of birds
a school of fish
a pride of lions

People

a gang of thieves
a troupe of actors
a team of ballplayers
a crew of helpers

- *A majority of, the majority of, a minority of:*

These partitives are used to show the proportion of some explicit set. *A majority of* and *the majority of* are used with quantities greater than half. *A minority of* is used to signal less (or fewer) than half:

A majority of the people feel that educational reform is a priority.⁵

- A few “partitives” can even be used to express a quality or subtype, rather than quantity, of a particular thing:

a sort of appliance new kinds of media
a type of bird

- Numbers as partitives:

Certain plural number words are used in partitive constructions to convey approximations and not exact numbers.

dozens of, scores of, hundreds of, thousands of, millions of, etc.

In these constructions, the second noun can be nonspecific or specific:

Millions of people watched the Olympics on TV.

Hundreds of the athletes gave their best performances.⁶

Similar constructions exist for exact numbers. However, there is a key difference. Such constructions are only possible when the second noun is specific. When the second noun is not specific, *of* is not used:

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| three hundred of the representatives | one dozen of the (brown) eggs |
| *three hundred of representatives | *one dozen of eggs |
| three hundred representatives | one dozen eggs |

Note that *hundred* and *dozen* remain singular with a specific number, even when the number preceding it is more than one:

***three hundreds of the representatives**
***two dozens of the eggs**

We return to consider the use of the word *of* later in this chapter.

Collectives

A *collective noun* is a noun that refers to a group of individuals. Collectives sometimes appear in partitive constructions, as we saw above in partitives for animals or people:

a team of ballplayers a flock of birds

Collective nouns are exceptional, in that, as subjects, they may take either singular or plural subject-verb agreement:

The team has been outstanding this year.
The team have been outstanding this year.

While plural verb agreement with collectives has been found to be much more frequent in British than in American English (Bock, Cutler, Eberhard, Butterfield, Cutting, & Humphreys, 2006), the preferred pattern is singular agreement in both dialects (Biber, Johansson, Leech,

Conrad, & Finegan, 1999).⁷ Even with singular verb agreement, however, speakers can choose to interpret the noun as a whole unit or as the individual members or components that compose the unit:

A flock of birds was circling the field. { **It was looking for prey** }
 { **They were looking for prey** }

The committee is blaming { **itself** }
 { **themselves** }.

Plural pronoun agreement with collectives is common in both American and British English (Bock et al., 2006). Such variation between singular and plural agreement is also observable in other anaphoric forms, such as possessive determiners and relative clauses:

The committee blamed { **its** } **chairperson.**
 { **their** }

My audience, { **which was** } **very supportive, ...**
 { **who were** }

According to Celce (1970), there are three main types of collective nouns. The first comprises common collectives, some of which can enter into partitive constructions, as you have just seen. They might be referred to as *particularizing* nouns because they talk about a particular collection of people or animals. The other types are the unique collectives, which represent the sole member of a particular set, and the generic collectives, which refer to all members of a class:

| <i>Common Collectives</i> | <i>Unique Collectives</i> | <i>Generic Collectives</i> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| (a/the) class | the Vatican | the clergy |
| (a/the) team | the Kremlin | the bourgeoisie |
| (a/the) herd⁸ | (the) Congress | the intelligensia |
| (a/the) government | (the) Parliament | the aristocracy |

Each of these collective nouns can be seen to be a single entity or a collection of individuals. One's perspective, in North American English at least, is more frequently signaled by the use of singular or plural anaphoric reference than by subject-verb agreement.

Collective Nouns Derived from Adjectives

In addition to these three types of collective nouns, a number of adjectivally derived nouns in English may be considered as generic collectives. Nouns like *the meek*, *the dead*, and *the rich*, when they have human reference, resemble generic collective nouns in a number of ways: they are always preceded by *the*, they are not overtly singular or plural, and they may refer to a whole group in general terms rather than to a particular or unique group.

An important difference between these collective nouns derived from adjectives and the other categories of collective nouns is that the adjective-based collectives always take plural verbs:

The elderly are increasingly asserting their rights.
 ***The elderly is increasingly asserting its rights.**

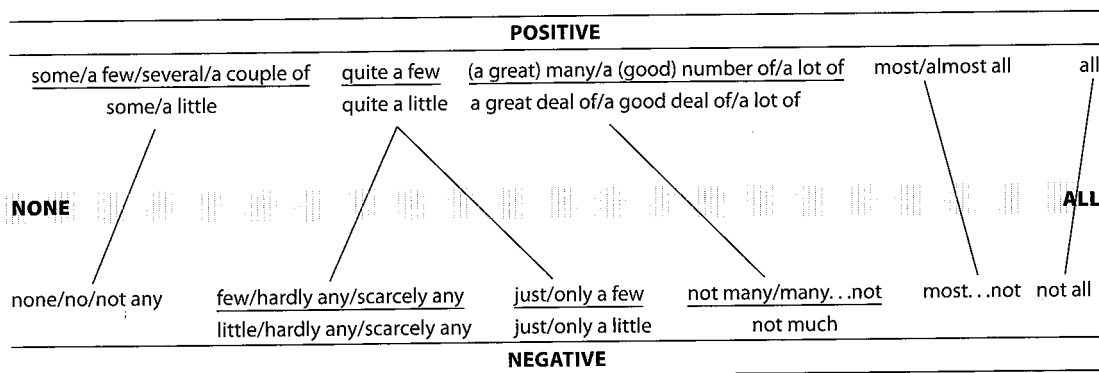
Quantifiers

As we have already noted, a third syntactic construction is used when we want to talk about amount or quantity. *Quantifiers* indicate a nonspecific amount or quantity of the noun that follows.⁹ Quantifiers can be determiners, or when the referent is clear, pronouns:

A: I want some ice cream.

B: I want some too.

It is helpful to arrange quantifiers showing increasing amounts along two continua—one positive and one negative.¹⁰ The diagonal lines connect items or sets of items that logically contradict each other. Quantifiers that modify count nouns are above the horizontal lines; those used with noncount nouns are below the lines. Where there are no lines, the quantifier can be used with count and noncount nouns alike. We explore each of these distinctions in more detail below the continua.



DIFFERING AMOUNTS

Going from left to right on the continua are increasing amounts of the noun being modified. To illustrate this, here is one progression from along the positive continuum:

Some packages have been brought in from the car.

Quite a few packages have been brought in.

A lot of packages have been brought in.

Almost all packages have been brought in.

All packages have been brought in.

We said earlier that quantifiers can be determiners or pronouns. This is easily seen in all these example sentences save the middle one. *A lot of* cannot be a pronoun, but *a lot* can:

Some have been brought in from the car.

Quite a few have been brought in.

A lot have been brought in.

Almost all have been brought in.

All have been brought in.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CONTINUA

The reason for the two continua is that the negative quantifiers not only convey quantity, but also convey a negative assessment of the quantity. The speaker or writer's negative stance is overtly marked by the negative particle *not* in many of the negative quantifiers:

Not all drivers are responsible (but all drivers should be).

With other quantifiers on the negative continuum, there is no negative particle; nonetheless, they have a negative connotation. These examples make the connotations explicit:

He took a few (= some, several) biscuits, with the result that few (= hardly any) were left for the rest of us.

He then took a little (= some) butter, with the result that little (= hardly any) was left for the rest of us.

Notice that one way to capture the negative connotation in the second quantifier in each of the pairs above is to paraphrase *few* and *little* as *hardly any* or *scarcely any*. Langacker (2012) explains the difference between *few/little* and *a few/a little* as a matter of perspective. *Few* and *little* quantify an amount that is contrasted with a normal amount. Thus, *few biscuits* is less than a normal number of biscuits. The starting point in this perspective is the norm, and the “less than” direction makes *few* and *little* negative quantifiers. When the indefinite article is part of the quantifier phrase (*a few/a little*), the starting point is zero. *A few biscuits* is a small number that is more than zero. The “more than” direction in this perspective makes *a few* and *a little* positive quantifiers.

Another difference between *a few* or *a little* and *few* or *little* is that the former can occur in the first utterance in a discourse; for example:

Do you have $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a few minutes} \\ \text{a little time} \end{array} \right\}$?

There are a few apples in the kitchen if you'd like one.

There's a little cake in the kitchen if you'd like some.

Few and *little*, however, generally require more context because a negative or contradictory tone must be established:

Harold was lonely and desperate; he had few friends and little money.

Many ESL/EFL students omit the indefinite article when they use *a few* or *a little*. While the result is not necessarily an inaccurate construction, the listener or reader is likely to be confused by the use of an implicitly negative quantifier when a positive one seems to be required by the discourse:

?I have few good friends back home. They write to me often.

QUANTIFIERS ARE DETERMINERS

You may already have noticed that some of the quantifiers take the form of a partitive construction—a phrase consisting of a noun of quantity followed by *of* and preceded by the indefinite article: *a lot of*, *a number of*, *a great deal of*, *a couple of*.

Notice that these phrasal quantifiers are not true partitives for several reasons:

- They convey a nonspecific number or amount, whereas partitives tend to convey a more specific number or amount:

Quantifier: **The bulldozer has already cleared a lot of land at the construction site.**

Partitive: **The bulldozer has already cleared 10 acres of land at the construction site.**

- Their nouns can't be quantified in the same way that partitive nouns can:

They lost a good deal of money in the pyramid scheme.

***They lost** $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{two good deals of money} \\ \text{two lots of money} \end{array} \right\}$ **in the stock market.**

There were a number of problems with the show.

***There were** $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{two numbers of problems} \\ \text{two couples of problems} \end{array} \right\}$ **with the opening act.**

- Like other quantifiers, they can precede partitives:¹¹

A couple of pounds of sliced turkey should last for a while.

Several wagonloads of hay should see us through the winter.

- Finally, and perhaps most important, when they modify a subject, the main verb agrees with the noun that follows the phrasal quantifier:¹²

A lot of cards were on the table.

A number of marbles are on the floor.

This contrasts with the subject-verb agreement shown by true partitives:

A deck of cards was on the table.

A box of marbles is on the floor.

In other words, these phrasal quantifiers are determiners, as we have already observed, not the partitive noun + *of* construction.

QUANTIFIERS WITH COUNT/NONCOUNT NOUNS

As you have seen, some quantifiers occur only with count nouns, others with noncount nouns, and still others with both.

Count: **There weren't many people at the soccer game due to the inclement weather.**

Noncount: **There wasn't much food left after the players ate.**

Both count and noncount: **There weren't a lot of people at the soccer game. There wasn't a lot of food left.**

When *much* and *many* are used as pronouns, the verb form associated with each reflects the difference: *many* requires a plural verb, whereas *much* agrees with a singular verb:

Many are called every year.

Much is done by nonprofit organizations.

With *a lot of*, the verb agrees with the number of the noun being quantified.

A lot of people were there.

A lot of time was wasted.

Grammar books will often say that *much* has a restricted use—that it is used in questions and negatives, but they say that *a lot of* is preferred in affirmative statements:

Does Jake have many friends?

Does Jake have much fun?

Jake doesn't have many friends.

Jake doesn't have much fun.

Jake has many friends.

***Jake has much fun.**

Jake has a lot of friends.

Jake has a lot of fun.

While this is a good rule of thumb for beginning and low intermediate level ESL/EFL students, it is not the whole story. Neumann (1975) found that in formal written contexts, *much* can be used in affirmative statements:

(in a job application) **I have much experience in the skills you have listed as required for the position.**

Even here, though, Neumann found that native speakers preferred *a great deal of* in such a context. She also reports that native speakers prefer *many* over *a lot of* in formal contexts, even in affirmative statements, a finding confirmed by Biber et al. (1999) for academic English:

Today, more people are raising children alone, and many individuals are discovering that the act of being the sole parent can be very difficult.

Notice, too, that unmodified *much* and *many* cannot readily be used pronominally in short answers to questions:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| How much money does it cost? | { *Much. Not much. A little. } |
| How many books do you have? | { ?Many. Not many. (Quite) A few. } |

USING OF BEFORE SPECIFIC NOUNS

Notice that just as you saw earlier with numerals, quantifiers can be made to modify specific noun phrases, too. This is done by adding *of* before the specific noun phrase:

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| many of these teachers | *many these teachers |
| a few of the students | *a few the students |
| hardly any of their parents | *hardly any their parents |

Also notice that for these quantifiers, *of* cannot be part of the construction when the quantified noun is not definite:¹³

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| *many of teachers | many teachers |
| *a few of students | a few students |
| *hardly any of parents | hardly any parents |

The definiteness of the quantified noun has implications for the extreme end of the negative continuum, where *no* and *none* appear to complement each other. That is, *no* is used as a determiner before nouns that are not definite, while *none of* is used before nouns that are definite and can function as a pronoun:

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| No schools would agree to it. | *No would agree to it. |
| None of the schools would agree to it. | None would agree to it. |

Prescriptive grammarians have insisted that it is unnecessary to use the *of* after the quantifiers *all* and *both* (we deal with the latter below) except when they precede a pronoun, in which case *of* is required. It is true that neither *all* nor *both* need *of* to signal a specific noun following them, because the semantics of *all* and *both* demand that the noun be specific:

| |
|---|
| All (the) juniors will register tomorrow. |
| All of them |
| Both (the) seniors were inducted into the Honor Society. |
| Both of them |

However, the use of *of* with *all* and *both* is quite common, especially in North American English, as you saw in Chapter 4, presumably by analogy with the other quantifiers:

| |
|--|
| All of the juniors will register tomorrow. |
| Both of the seniors were inducted into the Honor Society. |

COMPARATIVE QUANTIFIERS

We will have much to say about comparatives later in this book, but it is appropriate at this juncture to point out that even though they are determiners or pronouns and not adjectives, several quantifiers have comparative and superlative forms like adjectives:

| | Comparative | Superlative |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| much | more | most |
| many | more | most |
| few | fewer | fewest |
| little | less | least |

Whereas many of the quantifiers on the continua above are absolute, the comparative and superlative forms are relative:¹⁴

Many people are telecommuting these days.

Still, more people prefer to work in an office in the company of others.

And most people don't have a choice.

I have few homework assignments these days.

I have fewer homework assignments than I did at the beginning of the term.

I have the fewest homework assignments of anyone I know.¹⁵

Note that although prescriptively speaking, *less* is reserved for noncount nouns, *less* is increasingly used for both count nouns and noncount nouns, especially in informal discourse. For example, a recent Google search of the phrase “less calories” produced 1,370,000 results. This number is just over half of the results produced by a search of the prescriptively preferred “fewer calories” (2,640,000 results). In fact, a search of “less accidents” actually yielded more results (297,000) than did a search of “fewer accidents” (245,000).

We have more to say about the use of these quantifiers in Chapters 34 and 35.

QUANTIFIERS WITH SPECIAL SEMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS

Other quantifiers are excluded from our continua because of their special semantic nature: *any*, *both*, *each*, *every*, *either*, *neither*, *enough*, *plenty of*, *the whole of*, *the rest of*, and *the remainder of*.

- *Any*, as you saw in earlier chapters, is used in negatives and questions as a counterpart to the unstressed article *some*. *Any* can also be used in affirmative statements as a quantifier, and when it is, it refers to “one or more, no matter which” (Jespersen, 1933, p. 181).

Any of those answers will do.

Any household detergent works.

Bolinger (1960) notes that such sentences are related to conditionals; that is, *if something is a household detergent, it will work*. The conditional sense of *any* extends to sentences such as:

Any (of the) pasta left at the end of the meal will be put in a casserole.

A paraphrase of this example would be *pasta, if there is any*.

- *Both* can be followed only by plural nouns signaling quantities of two:

Two boys and a girl were accused of setting off a false alarm. Both (of the) boys felt ashamed of what they had done.

- *Each* refers to all members of a group, but does so individually, rather than collectively. It therefore modifies a singular noun and takes a singular verb:

Each special effect was created by a different computer programmer.

- *Each* may be used with *of* to highlight the definiteness of the group's individual members:

Each of the special effects was created by a different computer programmer.

Notice when this construction [*each of the* (plural noun)] is in subject position, the verb number is still singular.

- *Every* is much like *each* in its meaning but is more collective. It too takes a singular verb:

Every special effect was created by a different programmer.

Unlike *each*, however, *every* cannot function as a pronoun:

***I will describe every.**

I will describe each.

- *Every* must also be followed by *one* in quantifier expressions using *of*:

Every one of the special effects was created by a different programmer.

***Every of the special effects was created by a different programmer.**

- *Either* and *neither* are like *both* in that two members of a set are being considered. In fact, sometimes *either* can substitute for *both*. However, both *either* and *neither* take singular verbs (see Chapter 4):

Either date is preferable to September 7.

Both dates are preferable to September 7.

- *Either* can also offer a choice between two alternatives:

When you are through, you can ask either of us to help you clean up.

- *Neither* means “not one and not the other”:

Neither of us knows the answer.

Neither twin has ever married.

- *Enough* means “sufficient”:

We have enough volunteers to finish building the playground.

With the exception of *every*, all of the quantifiers we have just examined can stand alone as pronouns:

Would you like any?

I'll have both.

Each has its own merits.

Either will do.

Neither will work.

We've had enough.

- *Plenty of* means more than sufficient or ample. Although it appears across registers, it is most frequent in informal speech:

We have plenty of volunteers to finish building the playground.

- *The whole of*,¹⁶ *the rest of*, *the remainder of* quantify definite nouns and are used to express an entire thing or a specific part of it:

The whole of Quebec is francophone.

In $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{the rest of} \\ \text{the remainder of} \end{array} \right\}$ the country, English is the dominant language.

As with other quantifiers, when *the rest of* and *the remainder of* appear in constructions with plural nouns in subject position, the verb agrees with the second noun:

The rest of the exercises are easy.

The remainder of the classes were canceled.

INFORMAL QUANTIFIERS

Not listed on our continua are phrasal quantifiers that are often restricted to informal registers:

- *a bunch of, a heap of, a load of*

These phrases, originally partitive constructions denoting shape, may also be used as quantifiers that signal a nonspecific number or amount. For example, consider the following:

A bunch of grapes was removed from the vine. (partitive)

A bunch of grapes were in the salad. (quantifier)

A bunch of grapes in the first sentence is a partitive phrase that refers to a collection of grapes connected to the same stem, while *a bunch of* in the second sentence refers to the individual grapes in the salad. As we saw earlier, subject-verb agreement clearly distinguishes the partitive from the quantifier (at least in cases where the partitive noun is singular and the second noun is plural). These quantifiers can modify plural count nouns (*a heap of troubles*) as well as noncount nouns (*a heap of trouble*):¹⁷

- *lots of, heaps of, loads of, oodles of, stacks of*

These all signal a large quantity and may appear with count nouns (*loads of bills*) and noncount nouns (*loads of cash*):

- *a bit of, a flicker of, a scrap of, a shred of, a sliver of, a speck of, a spot of, a trace of, a touch of, a whiff of*

These all signal a small quantity and, with the exception of *a bit of*, are used much less frequently than other quantifiers [for more on the pragmatic and collocational restrictions of such constructions, see Brems (2007)]. Just like the other phrases in this section, these small quantity phrases are used both as partitives and as quantifiers:

She could see a flicker of light emanating from the candle. (partitive)

We were left without a flicker of hope. (quantifier)

Brems (2003) argues that the reason for their hybrid status is that they originated as lexical items, denoting shape, and they are in the process of becoming grammaticalized, i.e., used as lexicogrammatical constructions to signal an amount.

FLOATED QUANTIFIERS

We have seen that quantifiers appear as determiners and as pronouns. But what do we make of the following?

The votes have all been counted.

All quantifies *the votes* but does not come before the noun phrase, as we would expect with a normal determiner. This unusual position is known as *quantifier float*. The set of quantifiers that may be “floated” is restricted to *all*, *both*, and *each*, which may appear in the following positions (Reed, 2010):

after the subject noun phrase: **The four candidates *each* gave a good speech.**

after the first auxiliary verb: **The votes have *all* been counted.**

after copular *be*: **The winning candidate and her husband are *both* pleased with the results.**

before or after *not*: **The losing candidates are *all* not happy.**

The voting public is not *all* satisfied with the results.¹⁸

The Order of Determiners in a Noun Phrase

Although (believe it or not!) we have not considered all the possible forms that can serve as determiners in English, in the last few chapters, we have dealt with the most important types. Thus, it is appropriate now to revisit a point that we first made in Chapter 5. We said then that there are three subcategories of determiners to consider when sequencing determiners before a noun. The following is a chart (based on Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1985) that distributes most of the determiners we have explored thus far into one of the three subcategories:

| <i>Predeterminers</i> | <i>Core Determiners</i> | <i>Postdeterminers</i> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| quantifiers: all, | articles | cardinal numbers |
| both, half | possessives | ordinal numbers |
| multipliers: double, | demonstratives | general ordinals: |
| twice, three times, etc. | quantifiers: some, any, | next, last, another, etc. |
| intensifiers: | no, each, every, either, | quantifiers: many, much, |
| such a, what a | neither, enough | (a) few, (a) little, several, more, |
| | | less, most, least |
| | | phrasal quantifiers: |
| | | a great deal of, a lot of, a |
| | | good number of, etc. |

It is possible to sequence determiners in an English noun phrase by picking one determiner from the predeterminer column, one from the core determiner column, and one or more from the postdeterminer column. Here are some examples:

| | | |
|------------|---------------|--------------------|
| pre | core | post |
| All | our | many |
| | were | kept |
| | alive | by |
| | her | encouraging |
| | words. | |

core post post

These next two weeks before school starts will be hectic.

Not all combinations are possible, of course. For instance, quantifiers may be present in all three positions, but they cannot always be combined:

***Half every paycheck goes to pay off our mortgage.**

When a predeterminer quantifier is used as a pronoun, with the partitive *of* phrase following it, though, it is possible to have one quantifier from each of the first two columns combined:

Half of every paycheck goes to pay off our mortgage.

Conclusion

Our treatment of the linguistic devices that English speakers use in quantification has been limited. Still, it is apparent that there is a lot to learn. We hope that it has also been clear that these devices are quite common. Indeed, we found that we have used a lot of (!) quantifiers, collectives, and partitives to talk about quantifiers, collectives, and partitives! We should also point out that while the core quantifiers constitute a closed class, partitives are an open class. Indeed, the pattern for partitives is very productive, which means that it can be extended to create new expressions all the time.

ESL/EFL students should have no trouble grasping the semantic concepts of these linguistic devices in general. However, they will struggle with some of the details of form, the difference in positive and negative connotations as depicted on our two continua, and perhaps with the development of a large enough repertoire of these expressions to provide both variety and appropriateness in the ways in which they express quantification in English.

Teaching Suggestions

- 1. Form/Meaning.** To have students practice partitives, play the “supermarket” game. A student starts the game by saying “I went to the supermarket and I bought . . .” completing the sentence with a partitive and a noun beginning with the letter A; for example, “a bag of apples.” The second student must repeat the sentence and add to it with a partitive and a noun beginning with the letter B; for example, “I went to the supermarket and I bought a bag of apples and a bunch of bananas.” The third student might add: “I went to the supermarket and I bought a bag of apples, a bunch of bananas, and a box of cookies.” The game continues until all students have had a chance, or all 26 letters have been used, or when the teacher and students are stumped in finding examples!
- 2. Form/Meaning.** Have your students bring in their favorite recipes and share them with one another. This will give them good practice in using measure quantifiers. Collect the recipes and “publish” a class cookbook. If possible, prepare some of the recipes together.
- 3. Form/Meaning.** Plan a party with your class. Have students figure out what they would like to serve and how much they will need of each item. Draw up a shopping list. If practical, go on a shopping trip together, using the opportunity to introduce some of the idiomatic partitives for fruits and vegetables you find.
- 4. Meaning.** Here are two books, intended for children, which can be used to expose students to collective nouns:
 - *Beasts by the Bunches*, by A. Mifflin Lowe, 1987 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday), in which the author has written a poem for each collective noun.
 - *A Cache of Jewels and Other Collective Nouns*, by Ruth Heller, 1987 (New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.), which has great illustrations and which also shows the variety of collective nouns that can be used for the same animal group.
- 5. Meaning.** Ask students to examine agreement patterns exhibited by collective nouns in authentic texts, such as short newspaper articles. Have your students underline all the collectives, as well as any verbs or pronouns that refer to them. You can then generate a discussion around how the author is conceptualizing the collective nouns. Alternatively, if you are having trouble finding texts with a sufficient number of collectives, you can always provide students individual sentences to examine, as in Thewlis (2007, p. 369).
- 6. Meaning.** This two-part exercise allows students to practice both the form and meaning of quantifiers. First, dictate sentences with quantifiers to students. Then ask the students to paraphrase the quantifier in one sentence with that of another. For example:
 - Teacher:** 1a. There was little money left after the shopping spree.
 - Students:** 1b. There wasn’t much money left after the shopping spree.
 - Teacher:** 2a. A majority of the items we bought were purchased in the first hour.
 - Students:** 2b. More than half of the items we bought were purchased in the first hour.

Teacher: 3a. However, a few items were purchased later.

Students: 3b. However, some items were purchased later.

This format provides a good opportunity to test students on their ability to hear the distinction between *a few* and *few*, as well as *a little* and *little*. Given the reduction of the indefinite article, for many students this is not an easy distinction to make. You might also extend this exercise to include the area of use by asking students to provide more or less formal quantifiers in their paraphrases.

7. **Form.** Dictation can also be used to offer students practice in quantifying definite and indefinite nouns. Read out loud sentences such as the following for students to write:

1. *Most of workers are on strike.
2. *A few the people are still working.
3. Scarcely any of the newspapers are covering the story.
4. *Many of reporters don't seem to be interested.
5. *None the striking workers are pleased.

First, have students underline all the quantifiers. Next, have them identify which forms are incorrect (as in sentences 1, 2, 4, and 5). Then ask them to make corrections and to explain their corrections. The explanation phase allows you to see if students are making the connection to use *of* for definite nouns or to drop *of* for indefinite nouns. This phase also allows you to hear students' thinking behind unanticipated corrections. Be aware that there are often multiple ways to correct the problematic sentences. For example, in (1), *of* could be deleted or *the* could be inserted between *of* and *the*. In the first correction, *workers* are treated as indefinite; in the second, *workers* are definite.

8. **Form.** Corpora may be exploited as a way of encouraging students to recognize the *of*-pattern in quantifier expressions for specific nouns. For example, you can direct your students to the Corpus of Contemporary American English: COCA (<http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>) and have them search phrases such as *a few of* and *many of*. Ask students what they notice about the words immediately to the right of the searched quantifier phrase. It should be abundantly clear that the next word is most often the definite article, a demonstrative determiner, a pronoun, or a possessive—all forms that signal definiteness. Then ask students to remove the word *of* from their searches (e.g., search *a few* and *many*.) They will see that there is no longer a pattern of definiteness to the immediate right of the quantifier.

9. **Use.** Ask students to conduct a survey of their classmates' preferences. In small groups, students should decide which preferences they would like to survey, such as type of music, type of book, food, movie, and so on. Staying in their small groups, students should design a questionnaire to collect the information they wish to learn. After the questionnaires have been distributed and completed, the group should compile the information and report their findings to the rest of the class. They should use quantifiers first and then use percentages to be more precise. For example:

Our survey shows that some students in our class prefer rock music, some prefer classical music, and a few prefer jazz. Forty percent chose rock music, . . .

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide an original sentence illustrating each of the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your example.
 - a. partitive noun
 - b. idiomatic partitive noun
 - c. collective noun
 - d. collective noun derived from adjective
 - e. quantifier
 - f. quantifier with negative connotation
 - g. quantifier for count nouns
 - h. phrasal quantifier
2. Account for the ungrammaticality or semantic problems in each of the following sentences:
 - a. *Chalk are on blackboard tray.
 - b. *A lot people were at the garage sale.
 - c. *Although he had few close friends, he was very lonely.
 - d. *He has a deal of energy today.
 - e. *Almost people like Chinese food.
3. Explain the difference between (i.) and (ii.) in each of the following pairs of sentences.
 - a. (i.) Many of the workers at the plant lost their jobs due to downsizing.
(ii.) Many workers lost their jobs due to downsizing.
 - b. (i.) The class didn't quiet down; it was in a boisterous mood.
(ii.) The class didn't quiet down; they were in a boisterous mood.
 - c. (i.) Thanks a lot.
(ii.) Thanks lots.
 - d. (i.) I got a speck of dust in my eye.
(ii.) I got a piece of dust in my eye.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

4. ESL/EFL students have produced the following. How would you guide them to more standard usage?
 - a. *I still have much problem in learning English.
 - b. *Larry bought a dozen of eggs.
 - c. *Peg needs to get some informations for her term paper.
 - d. ?We have much homework tonight.
 - e. *Some my friends are going camping this weekend.
 - f. *Katie likes the song "Five Hundreds Miles."
 - g. *I need a couple a minutes.
 - h. *Some of books on the table may be yours.
5. Explain the plural use of the number-based noun in the following newspaper headline:
Greece: A Centuries-Old Framework for Contemporary Living

6. A student asks you to explain why in one instance several is followed by of and in another instance it isn't. How would you explain? Note that you can use suprasentential information to help you.

The Chinese have given a pair of pandas to the Bronx Zoo. They have had several offspring. Several of the offspring have been sent to other zoos around the country.

7. There are two ways of making a noun specific when it is preceded by a partitive. One is to use a definite determiner with the partitive noun. Alternatively, a definite determiner can be used with the following noun:

Will { **this deck of cards** } do?
 { **a deck of these cards** }

What is the difference between them? It will help to answer this question if you generate some of your own examples.

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- Thewlis, S. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 3* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For linguistic analyses of quantification, see:

- Hintikka, J. (1974). Quantifiers and quantification theory. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 5, 151–157.
- Hogg, R. (1977). *English quantifier systems*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: North Holland Publishing Company.
- Radden, G., & Dirven, R. (2007). *Cognitive English grammar*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins

For a usage study on quantifiers, see:

- Behre, F. (1967). *Studies in Agatha Christie's writings: The behavior of a good (great) deal, a lot, lots, much, plenty, many, a good (great) many*. Gothenberg Studies in English. Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag.

For corpus studies regarding the use of English quantifiers, see:

- Ariel, M. (2004). *Most*. *Language*, 80(4), 658–706.
- Vannestål, M. E. (2004). *Syntactic variation in English quantified noun phrases with all, whole, both, and half*. Växjö, Sweden: Växjö University Press.

For pedagogical suggestions in teaching quantifiers, consult:

- Badalamenti, V., & Henner-Stanchina, C. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 1* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
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For pedagogical ideas for teaching quantifiers and collective nouns, see:

- Byrd, P., & Benson, B. (1989). *Improving the grammar of written English: The handbook*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
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Endnotes

1. You may wish to review the rules presented in Chapter 4 for subject-verb agreement for fractions and percentages.
2. Schwarzschild (2002) distinguishes between partitives and pseudopartitives. The latter requires a determiner-less noun in the second noun slot (*a deck of cards, a drop of water*); whereas, a true partitive consists of a noun with determiner in the second noun slot (*a deck of these cards, a drop of the water*). In this book, we refer to both as partitives.
3. You can add *-ful* to container partitives:

a boxful of chocolates a bagful of chips

 You can also add *-ful* to some other partitives:

a mouthful of food a houseful of company

 Notice that some measure words require *-ful*:

a spoonful of medicine

***a spoon of medicine**

4. The count noun *pair* also occurs with other nouns that are usually in pairs, but these nouns may also occur in the singular:

- a pair of shoes** **an old shoe**
- a pair of earrings** **a jade earring**

5. *Majority* and *minority* can also be considered collective nouns. See our treatment in Chapter 4 for subject-verb agreement with *majority* and *minority*.

6. Notice that with large nonspecific numbers, such as

Tens of thousands of fans sought tickets to the rock concert.

the partitive may be preceded by another number + *of*.

7. In an examination of British English within the Collins COBUILD corpus, Depraetere (2003) found only one collective noun (*staff*) to exhibit significant preference for plural verbs. In analyzing a subset of the British National Corpus, Bock et al. (2006) observed that (in addition to *staff*) *clergy*, *couple*, *mob*, and *quartet* strongly prefer plural verbs. Bock et al. (2006) point out three collectives that “are reliably specified as plurals in standard American [English];” these are *people*, *cattle*, and *police* (p. 89).

8. Although modern English prefers more general collectives for animals (e.g., *herd*, *flock*, *swarm*), older forms of English had many more of these idiomatic collectives for animals, *a brace of partridges*, *a gaggle of geese*, *a pod of whales*, *a leap of leopards*, and so on.

9. Except for *all* and *none*, which are at the extreme ends of the scale presented on page 336.

10. The quantifiers on the continua are among the most frequently used. Not all quantifiers are represented. We discuss others with special semantic meaning later in this chapter.

11. Normally, partitives don't follow other partitives, although it is possible for a quantity partitive to be included within the scope of a quality partitive:

Two types of bars of soap

***Two bars of types of soap**

12. As you saw earlier, this is not the case with the true partitives, whose nouns determine number agreement with the verb when the partitive is in subject position:

A pile of dishes was in the sink.

Two piles of dishes were in the sink.

13. This is not the case for those phrasal quantifier expressions containing *of* that are listed in the continua: *a couple of*, *a number of*, *a lot of*, *a great deal of*, *a good deal of*. These may quantify definite or indefinite nouns because the *of* is part of the quantifier phrase. For example:

A couple of those cars.

A couple of cars.

A lot of the drivers.

A lot of drivers.

14. Another quantifier that is relative is *all*. *All* is relative in the sense that it specifies a quantity in relation to a reference quantity. Langacker (1991) shows that in response to a question asking *how many*, an absolute quantifier would be acceptable, but a relative one would not:

How many California condors still exist?

Several

A few

Nineteen

(absolute quantifiers)

***All**

***Most**

***Each**

(relative quantifiers)

15. Since *fewest* is a superlative form, where its set is specified, it requires the definite article. See Chapter 35.

16. The difference between *the whole of* and the quantifier *all* is very complicated. See Quirk et al. (1985) or Huddleston and Pullum (2002, p. 375) for the details.

17. Brems (2010) points out that in their quantifier form, these phrases collocate with a fairly wide range of nouns. In their partitive form (or “head use,” as Brems calls it), the second noun is restricted to a subset of concrete nouns.

18. Notice the difference in meaning between *all not* and *not all*. In the first sentence, the quantifier takes scope over *not*: *all of the losing candidates were not happy*. In the second sentence, *not* takes scope over the quantifier: *not all of the voting public is satisfied*. (See Chapter 10.)

The Passive Voice

CHAPTER

18

Introduction

In this chapter, we look at a grammatical category that is different from the others that we have explored thus far. The category is *voice*, which uses a form of the verb to tell us whether the subject is the actor or is acted upon. The two basic voices are active and passive. You are well acquainted with the active voice because it is the unmarked voice that we have been investigating up to this point. The more marked voice, the passive voice, is the focus of this chapter.

In the active voice, the subject of a clause is very often the agent, or doer, of some action:

Darwin studied the fauna of the Galapagos Islands.

At other times, speakers/writers of English will have reason to put the experiencer of the action, sometimes referred to as the *patient*, into subject position. One way to do so is to use the passive voice:

The fauna of the Galapagos Islands was studied by Darwin.

As Langacker (1987) has pointed out, the difference between active and passive is a focal adjustment analogous to the difference between these two sentences:

The cat is under the blanket.

The blanket is over the cat.

In other words, using the passive allows speakers to make a kind of figure/ground reversal.

Most languages in the world employ different voices to put different constituents in focus. For example, in the Bantu languages, the passive is used if the agent is inanimate and the patient or experiencer of the action is animate. Thus, in the following example, speakers of Bantu languages would strongly prefer the passive voice:

Elsa was bothered by the election.

over the active:

The election bothered Elsa.

Another example comes from Japanese. Japanese has two passive voices, one of which is similar to the English passive voice. The other passive voice in Japanese is an adversative passive, in which the subject is adversely affected by the action portrayed in the verb (Wierzbicka, 1988). For example:

John ga ame ni fur-are-ta.

John (topic marker) rain by fall (passive) (past)

The literal translation of this sentence, *John was fallen by rain*, is interpreted to mean that John was adversely affected by rain. Although “neutral” passives are possible in Japanese, adversative passives are common enough that Japanese students may puzzle over when to use the passive voice in English.

Speakers of other topic-comment typological languages, such as Chinese, have a passive, but it is not employed often. What Chinese speakers do when speaking English is use a “pseudo-passive,” which Han (2000) attributes to Chinese topic-comment typology as well as syntactic structure.

***New cars must keep inside. (= New cars must be kept inside.)**

Another dimension to the English passive, which it shares with many languages, is that it has a stative version and a dynamic one. It makes sense that the stative passive is made with a form of the classically stative *be* verb:

The start of school was delayed by the snow.

and that, the dynamic passive is constructed with the *get* verb:

We got dismissed early, too.

The fact that English has these two passives is sometimes overlooked in ESL/EFL instructional materials. Also, from this last example, it may be obvious why linguists suggest a relationship between passive participles and past participles functioning as adjectives, e.g.:

Mike was/got annoyed at Julie’s remark.

We will have more to say about adjectives in Chapter 20, but it is worth bearing in mind their relevance as we consider the meaning of the passive here. We also note that style manuals often admonish writers to avoid using the passive voice. We object to such dictates because the passive has an important role to play, which we discuss when we take up the use of the passive later in this chapter. What is important is that students understand when to use the passive voice rather than the active. Indeed, their not doing so also results in overuse of the passive:

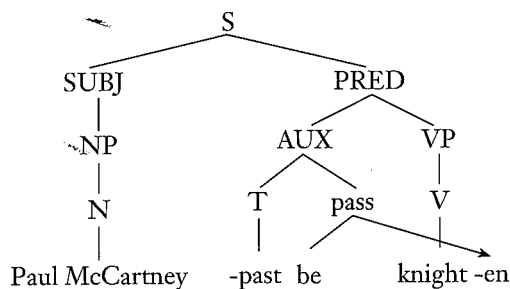
***Many restaurant managers are carried out customer satisfaction surveys.** (example from Celce-Murcia & Hinkel, 2014)

In fact, although many ESL/EFL grammar books make it seem that the learning challenge for the passive is its form, this is not true from our perspective. Our experience has shown us that it is learning when to use the English passive that presents the greatest long-term challenge to ESL/EFL students. Nonetheless, as with all constructions, students will have to learn its forms and their meanings, so it is to these we turn first, before concluding the chapter by explicating the use of the passive voice.

Forms of the English Passive

As we have just noted, the passive allows the NP that receives the action of the verb to occupy the subject position. Not all verbs convey actions, of course, but we will start with those that do. Here is a tree to illustrate a passive sentence:

Paul McCartney was knighted.



Note that the normal word order of English still holds, but the auxiliary has been expanded to include the passive morphology: a form of the *be* verb + the past participle—*be...-en*. We will need to elaborate our phrase structure rule for the auxiliary to accommodate the passive:

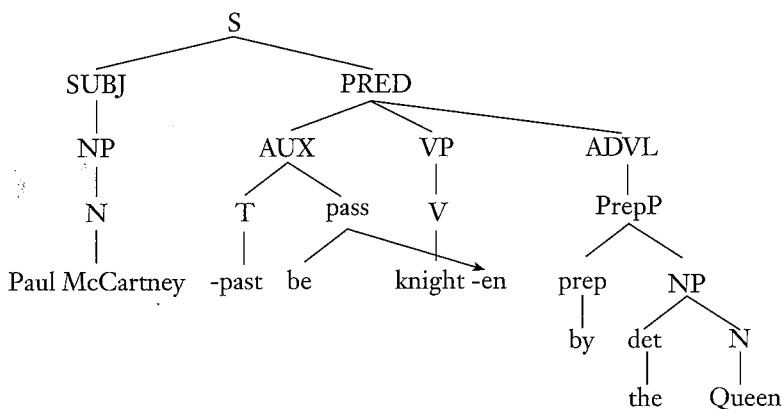
$$\text{AUX} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{T} \\ \text{M} \end{array} \right] \quad (\text{pm}) \quad (\text{perf}) \quad (\text{prog}) \quad (\text{pass})^1 \\ \text{-imper} \end{array} \right\}$$

And a new phrase structure rule specifying the composition of the passive is required:

pass → *be...-en*

As can be seen in our example sentence, the agent of the action is not the subject of the sentence. In fact, usually in passive sentences, the agent is not mentioned at all [for this reason, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) call it “the short passive” (p. 679)]. If the agent is mentioned, it appears in a prepositional phrase marked with the preposition *by* [which Huddleston and Pullum call “the long passive” (p. 678)]. Here is how a tree with the long passive looks:

Paul McCartney was knighted by the Queen.



THE PASSIVE WITH TENSE AND ASPECT

What we have illustrated so far is the simple passive. It is also possible for the passive voice to interact with other elements in the auxiliary.² For illustrative purposes, here are a few of the combinations that exist:

- With simple present:
Copper is mined in Chile.
- With present perfect:
Copper has been mined in Chile.
- With modals:
Copper will be mined in Chile for some time to come.
- With present progressive:
Copper is being mined in Chile.
- With simple past:
Copper was mined in Chile.
- With past progressive:
Copper was being mined in Chile.

The perfect progressive forms of the *be*-passive are possible for some speakers of North American English, but they are rare since the *been being* combination is difficult to process:

Copper has *been being* mined in Chile for years.

Notice that in all of the above, the passive was the last auxiliary verb to appear in the string, thereby justifying its final position in our phrase structure rule for the auxiliary.

We also want to point out that it is not always the direct object that becomes the subject of a passive sentence. An indirect object of an active voice sentence can be the subject of a passive sentence, as can the object of a preposition. In the latter case, the preposition is “stranded” (i.e., left behind):

Stephanie was given a promotion. (indirect object as subject)

Brad is being operated *on* for a hernia. (object of the preposition is the subject)

OTHER PASSIVE VERBS

As we said in the introduction to this chapter, although *be* is the prototypical auxiliary verb of the passive, it is possible to have other verbs fulfill this function.

Get

The *get*-passive construction, as with ordinary *be*-passive, presents a process or event as undergone by the subject (Mitkovska & Buzarovska, 2012). Here is one of their examples, selected from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA):

My car *got broken into* this weekend, and the crooks stole \$1,500 of stuff.

In order to account for such examples, our phrase structure rule will have to include *get* as an alternative to *be*. One important structural difference to note between the *be*-passive and the *get*-passive is that *get* does not function as a true auxiliary verb in questions and negatives in the way that *be* does. As a result of this, *do* must serve as an operator for *get* in questions and negatives:

Be-passive

A: Was Bruno arrested?

B: No. He wasn't even caught.

Get-passive

A: Did Bruno *get* arrested?

B: No. He *didn't* even *get* caught.

Another difference that exists between the *be*-passive and the *get*-passive is that the latter can occur more readily with the perfect progressive:

His plans *have been getting* sidetracked for years.

?His plans *have been being* sidetracked for years.

The *get*-passive should not be confused with the main verb *get* followed by an adjective when it is used to mark a change of state:

Unfortunately, Lou *got sick* just before the big game.

Sometimes the adjective is in the form of a past participle, which makes it more difficult to distinguish the main verb *get* from the passive verb *get*.

Unfortunately, Lou *got indisposed* just before the big game. (*get* is the main verb, followed by a past participle, which is an adjective)

We return to the discussion of *get*-passives and *get* with adjectives later in this chapter.

Have

It is also possible for *have* to function as a passive auxiliary. When it does, we refer to it as the experiential *have* to distinguish it from the causative *have*, which we examine in Chapter 32.

Mary had her purse snatched.

passive (experiential—The purse-snatching happened to her. It was beyond her control.)

causative (Mary arranged for someone to snatch her purse—perhaps to file a fraudulent insurance claim.)

Note that the *have*-passive is a bit more complicated than the *be*-passive and the *get*-passive in that the pattern for the *have*-passive includes an intervening noun phrase: *have ... NP ...-en*, where the NP is the subject of the past participle.

Be (in Complex Passives)

The *be*-passive can also interact with complements such as *that*-clauses and infinitives, producing complex passives:

It is rumored that he will get the job.

That he will get the job has been decided.

John is thought to be intelligent.

We consider these further in Chapter 32.

PASSIVE ONLY

The passive is more limited than the active voice, in that only certain verbs (see below) may occur in the passive. However, some passive sentences in English have no active voice counterpart, such as

Mehdi was born in Tehran

?His mother bore Medhi in Tehran.

There is, of course, the active verb *to bear*, as in *The lioness bore three cubs*. However, for all intents and purposes, there is no active voice counterpart for *to be born* to talk about facts concerning human birth. Other verbs that occur commonly in the passive are *be deemed*, *be fined*, *be hospitalized*, *be jailed*, *be scheduled*, *be shipped*, *be staffed*, *be suspended*.

Similarly, some verbs readily enter into complex passives that have no variant in the active voice:

It is rumored that he is on his way out.

***Someone rumors that he is on his way out.**

For these reasons, and for reasons we give in the sections on the meaning and the use of the passive, we feel justified in positing a passive construction that is different from the active and not a mere variation of it.

The Meaning of the Passive

The passive can be said to have a grammatical meaning rather than a lexical one. It is a focus construction that exists to put the patient (i.e., the experiencer or undergoer of an action) in subject position. The subject is acted upon and is thus “passive.” Indeed, Shibatani (1985) has shown that the passive “defocuses” the agent. No matter when it is used or what its form, then, it will always have this core meaning. However, there are facts related to this core meaning with which the remainder of this chapter deals.

SEMANTIC CONSTRAINTS ON USING THE PASSIVE

The passive voice requires a transitive verb. This is not to say, however, that every passive sentence with a transitive verb is acceptable. Langacker (1987), for example, shows that the acceptability of passive sentences is influenced by several factors:

1. The more definite the subject is, the more acceptable the sentence in passive form is:
This poem was written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.
?Poems were written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.
2. With stative verbs, the more indefinite the object in the *by* phrase is, the more likely it is to be acceptable in its passive form:
Arthur Ashe was liked by everybody.
?Arthur Ashe was liked by me.
The movie has been seen by everyone in town.
?The movie has been seen by Jim.
3. The more the verb denotes a physical action, as opposed to a state, the more acceptable its use in a passive sentence is:
The ball was kicked over the goalposts.
?The ball was wanted by the other team.³

Notice, though, that if factors 1 and 2 are honored, then a stative verb like *want* can be used more easily in the passive voice:

This old jalopy of mine must be wanted by somebody!

Presumably the first two observations can be accounted for by recognizing that the information status of constituents appearing in initial position and in predicate position in English sentences is different. As you have already seen several times in this book, the subject NP usually presents given or known information, and is therefore typically more definite than any predicate NP. We have more to say about this in the section on use.

The third observation stems from the fact that the subject of a passive sentence needs to be somehow affected by the action of the verb. Therefore, certain transitive verbs are not likely to occur in the passive voice when used statively.⁴ This is true, for example, of the following verbs:

- Verbs of containing (e.g., *contain, hold, comprise*):
***Two gallons of water are held by the watering can.**
- Verbs of measure (e.g., *weigh, cost, last*):
***Five dollars is cost by the parking fine.**
- Reciprocal verbs (e.g., *resemble, look like, equal*):
***Lori is resembled by her father.**
- Verbs of fitting (e.g., *fit, suit*):
***He is suited by the plan.**
- Verbs of possession (e.g., *have, belong*):
***A car is had by him.**

MEANING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE

At other times, both active and passive voice can be used, but there is a difference in meaning or truth value. This is especially true when numerals or quantifiers are used; it is also true of generic statements:

Everyone in the room speaks two languages. (i.e., any two languages per person)

Two languages are spoken by everyone in the room. (i.e., two specific languages that everybody speaks) (Chomsky, 1965)

Few people read many books. (i.e., there are few people in this world who read lots of books)

Many books are read by few people. (i.e., there are many books that are read by few people) (Lakoff, 1968)

Moles dig tunnels. (This is a true generic statement about all moles.)

Tunnels are dug by moles. (This is not true. Not all tunnels are dug by moles.)

BE-PASSIVES VERSUS GET-PASSIVES

We offered an explanation for the difference between the passive *have* and the causative *have* by saying that the passive *have* talks about the subject as experiencer. Next, we turn to the semantic distinction between *be* and *get*.

As we said earlier, the *be*-passive is the prototypical passive verb. It is unmarked and thus semantically neutral, which is not true of the *get*-passive. *Get*-passives often suggest responsibility on the part of the subject, i.e., the subject brings “the action onto itself” (Barber, 1975), especially evident when followed by a reflexive pronoun (p.22):

He got invited to the party.

He got himself invited to the party.

According to Carter and McCarthy (1999), the English *get*-passive, like the Japanese passive, overwhelmingly tends to be used adversely (constituting 124 of 139 occurrences in their corpus of slightly over 1 million running words of informal spoken English). Here are some examples from their data:

A: And [er] she had gone in the house because I gave her the key.

B: Yeah.

A: And for some reason don't ask me why but she couldn't get out.

B: Oh no. She got locked in.

A: And I lost my second eldest brother.

B: Ahh yeah yeah

A: He was [er] sergeant and [er]

B: Yes, mm

A: he got killed [B: Mm] trying to save some other man, some other soldier.

The adversative nature of the *get*-passive was also borne out in a contextual analysis by Yim (1998), who found that the *get*-passive occurred with verbs from semantic categories such as physical assault (*get hit*), hindrance (*get trapped*), transference (*get snatched*), and verbs of emotional or mental strain (*get punished*). Yim suggests that the *get*-passive's affinity for affective connotations is consistent with its colloquial nature.

Another characteristic of the *get*-passive noted by Carter and McCarthy (1999) was its lack of expressed agent (130 of 139 *get*-passives were short passives); likewise, in Yim's (1998) data, 119 of 125 *get*-passives had no *by* phrases. In addition, there is the fact that *get*-passives could not replace *be*-passives with nondynamic verbs:

This bed had not been slept in.

***This bed had not got slept in.**

Joe hasn't been seen for years.

***Joe hasn't got(ten) seen for years.**

Yim's (1998) data support this observation. It appears that *get*-passives are predominantly associated with verbs that emphasize actions or processes. Consequently, they are also more likely to occur with adverbs of frequency:

This man continually got wiped out.

Finally, Yim (1998) notes that the overwhelming majority of *get*-passives in her data had human subjects (90.4 percent), which is not true of *be* passives.

PAST PARTICLES: ADJECTIVES OR PASSIVE?

Most of the time, the distinction between a past participle functioning as a passive verb and one serving as an adjective will be obvious. However, the distinction is not always clear cut. Willis (1994) points out that in a sentence such as

The windows were broken.

the past participle *broken* could be regarded as either adjectival or passive:

The house was a mess. The paintwork was peeling and the windows were broken.

(participle is adjectival)

The windows were broken by the force of the explosion. (participle is passive)

In the first interpretation, the past participle is descriptive, or stative, and thus adjectival. In the second, the past participle is dynamic, and thus passive. However, you will see in Chapter 20 that adjectives can sometimes be dynamic. Thus, in the end, in cases of ambiguity, the only distinguishing sentence-level feature that we are left with is the use of *by* with a noun phrase to mark an agent in the passive voice, if the passive is a long one:

The beans were refried. { by someone (passive)
 { present state of the beans (adjective)

The fact that not all adjectival and participle pairs are homophonous, even though their spelling makes them appear so, suggests that adjectives and passives have a different origin:

The learned scholar translated all the works of Hegel. (*Learned* as adjective is pronounced with two syllables.)

This was confirmed by Dubinsky and Simango (1996), who note that in Old English, there were two distinct affixes that have merged into the modern spelling *-ed*:

The congregation was blessed. (verb [b l ε s t])

The blessed event (adjective [b l ε s l d])

When it comes to the *get*-passive, Mitkovska and Buzarovska (2012) support the contention of Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) that there is a "passive gradient." They point to a form intermediate between *get*-passives and *get* + adjectives. These forms, such as *got dressed*:

He got up and made his way to the bathroom, where he showered, shaved, and got dressed.

do not really have a passive meaning, in that the subject retains agency; however, they are still labeled as "pseudo-passives" (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 161) or "adjectival passives" (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 1441) due to their form.

A MIDDLE VOICE CONSTRUCTION

We hinted in the introduction to this chapter of the existence of a means besides the passive to put a nonagentive patient into subject position. In fact, there is another option. Although it does not have a separate verb form from the active voice, this construction is sometimes referred to as “the middle voice.” The middle voice allows the subject of a sentence to be nonagentive, as in the passive voice, but the morphology of the verb to be in the active voice:

1. **Her high C shattered the glass.** (active voice)
2. **The glass was shattered by her high C.** (passive voice)
3. **The glass shattered.** (middle voice)

As Lock (1996) puts it, English allows a representation of processes not only in terms of actions (1 and 2), but also in terms of happenings (3). Other languages, of course, can report happenings as well. Some do so with the use of reflexives (examples from Shibatani, 1985):

| Spanish | French | Russian |
|--|---|---|
| Se abrió la puerta. (Refl. open the door.) | La porte s'est ouverte. (the door Refl.-is opened.) | Lekcija načalas'. (lecture began Refl.) |
| The door opened. | The door opened. | The lecture began. |

Instead, English uses special verbs to express spontaneous occurrences. Such verbs, which allow the object of a transitive clause to be a subject of an intransitive clause without changing voice, are called *ergative*, or change-of-state, verbs. Ergative verbs, such as *shatter*, can appear in all three voices; thus they take either agents or patients of the action as subjects. There are several hundred ergative verbs, so they are common enough so that students will encounter them frequently.

Many ergative verbs, like *shatter*, suggest changes of state: examples include *age, begin, bend, break, burst, change, close, condense, cool, decrease, develop, drop, dry, empty, end, evaporate, finish, grow, increase, melt, open, sink, slow, spread, start, stop, and tear.*

Three other categories of ergative verbs are mentioned in *Collins COBUILD English Grammar* (Sinclair & Fox, 1990):

- Verbs of cooking (*bake, boil, cook, defrost, fry, roast, thicken, etc.*):
I'm baking a cake.
The cake is being baked by her friends.
The cake is baking.
- Verbs of physical movement (*move, rock, shake, spin, swing, turn, etc.*):
The boy spun the top.
The top was spun by the boy.
The top spun.
- Verbs that involve vehicles (*drive, fly, park, reverse, run, sail, etc.*):
She drove the car.
The car was driven all the way to Tallahassee.
The car drives well.

Rutherford (1987) tells us that ESL/EFL students, for whom the idea of an ergative verb is new, sometimes object to such sentences as

The window broke.

The students argue that windows can't break themselves, and thus they feel obliged to use the passive or express an agent:

The window was broken.
Someone broke the window.

Difference between Passive and Middle Constructions

While such sentences are not wrong, of course, the active voice sentence with a patient subject is perfectly permissible in English with ergative verbs. The difference between the passive and middle constructions is that the passive suggests the existence of an agent, even if the agent is not explicit. The verb used ergatively does not permit an agent. This can be shown by the addition of a *by* phrase:

The window was broken. (passive)

The window broke. (ergative)

The window was broken by the gang.

***The window broke by the gang.**

Thus, the following are situations in which the middle construction is preferred to the passive with an explicit or implicit agent:

1. When the focus is on the change of state, and the agent is irrelevant.

The bank closes at 5 P.M.

2. When the writer's or speaker's objective is to create an aura of mystery or suspense—that is, things seem to be happening without the intervention of an agent:

We were sitting quietly after dinner, when suddenly the door opened.

3. When the subject is something so fragile or unstable that it can break, change, dissolve, and so on without any apparent intervention on the part of any agent:

Left hanging on the fence, the red balloon suddenly burst.

4. When it is natural to expect change to occur (i.e., physical, social, or psychological “laws” seem to be involved):

The ice on the pond melted earlier than usual.

5. When there are so many possible causes for a change of state that it would be misleading to imply a single agent:

Prices increased due to a variety of factors.

Another challenge for ESL/EFL students is to learn which verbs are ergative. Lock (1996) notes that students may make errors such as

***Many of the old buildings in the center of town have recently demolished.**

not because they have trouble with the passive voice, but rather because they have incorrectly, but understandably, assumed that the verb *demolish* can be used ergatively.

The middle voice is also used frequently in written scientific discourse where change is measurable. Research by Vongpumivitch (2002), who compiled a corpus of approximately a half million words from six on-line academic journals, demonstrates that verbs like *change*, *increase*, and *decrease* are far more often used in the middle voice than the passive voice. The following example begins with the passive and switches to the middle voice for two of these verbs:

Furthermore, brachial and femoral arterial blood flows were dissociated in response to vestibular stimulation, such that brachial vascular resistance increased while femoral resistance decreased. (*Brain Research Bulletin*, 53(1), 11-16)

Intransitive Verbs with Ergative Meaning

In addition to verbs that can occur in all three voices, an ergative meaning can be expressed by intransitive verbs that take the focus of the process as subjects:

- Verbs of occurrence—*happen*, *occur*, *take place*:

The incident occurred before anyone knew what was happening.

- Verbs of inherently directed motion (Rosen, 1984)—*arrive*, *fall*, *rise*, *emerge*, *go*:

The dough rose.

- Verbs of description—*appear, disappear, vanish*:

The trail disappeared into the woods.

Since these verbs have no transitive counterparts, they do not occur in the passive voice. These intransitive verbs in the active voice with nonagentive subjects cause problems for ESL/EFL students who sometimes overgeneralize the passive voice and write:

***The accident was happened last night.**

Yip (1995) reports that Chinese students produce such sentences possibly because students have been taught that sentences with grammatical subjects that are not agents require the passive in English. This is simply not the case, and ESL/EFL students need to learn about these intransitive verbs as well as the middle voice.

Extending the Middle Voice

It should be pointed out, however, that not all analysts accept a lexicalist approach to the middle voice. Yoshimura and Taylor (2004) explicitly reject the idea that there is a set number of “middle-forming” verbs. While change-of-state verbs easily enter into the middle voice:

The problem with ripe fruit is that it bruises easily.

it is also possible to extend the middle voice construction to other verbs when responsibility for a process is being shifted to a non-agent:

This product sells well.

Yoshimura and Taylor (2004) refer to the compatibility between the middle construction and advertising. Here are some of the examples they offer:

Erases easily with dry cloth, paper towel or tissue. (spoken of a whiteboard)

Looks great in the dining room, study, on the deck ... Folds away for easy storage and transportation. (spoken of a folding chair)

Testers found that it blended easily, gave the promised glow and wore well during the day. (spoken of a foundation cream)

Such middle-construction promotional statements often occur with simple present tense because they “characterize a . . . general aspect of the world’s ‘structure’, as opposed to specific phenomena which happen to occur within that stable framework” (Langacker, 2003, p. 19).

Other languages treat the thing or person who has been affected or has undergone the process with case endings (e.g., Japanese) or word order (e.g., Italian) to distinguish subjects of active intransitives from subjects of intransitives that are events or happenings (Zobl, 1989).

Giovanni telefona. (The subject-verb order indicates that the subject of the intransitive verb is an agent; therefore, the verb denotes an action.)

Arriva Giovanni. (The verb-subject order indicates that the subject is nonagentive, denoting a happening, not an action.)

‘Giovanni arrives.’

With its restricted word order, English will not permit such permutations, of course. Nevertheless, it does have a passive and a middle voice, which afford English speakers yet another option for achieving theme-rheme cohesion in discourse (Rutherford, 1987).

The Use of the Passive

Rutherford’s (1987) observation provides a convenient segue into a discussion on the use of the passive. Two central matters concern us here: knowing when English speakers use the passive, as opposed to the active, or middle voice; and knowing when they include an explicit agent in a passive sentence. As you will see, these two issues overlap considerably. We will also take up a few other issues regarding the use of the passive.

ACTIVE VERSUS PASSIVE

Again, we should remember that most languages have a means of shifting focus in a sentence. The English passive is not unique in this regard. What will be problematic, though, is that not all languages use the passive or equivalent focus constructions for the same reasons. We have already noted that the Japanese passive is most often adversative. While the English passive can be used to report adversity as well (especially the *get*-passive), the passive in English has a wider range than in many other languages. Nevertheless, the passive is the marked voice; English speakers normally select the agent as subject and use the active voice. Just when, then, is the passive preferred?

We have already indicated that the passive is used when we want to defocus the agent. The following are three specific times when this might be warranted (Thompson, 1987):

1. The passive is used when the agent is not to be mentioned because
 - it is redundant or easy to supply:
Pineapples are grown in Hawaii.
 - it is unknown:
The bank was robbed yesterday.
 - it is very general:
By the end of the 1960s, the United States could no longer be described as a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant nation. (example from Hayes, 1992)
 - the speaker/writer is being tactful by not mentioning the agent:
Margaret was given some bad advice about selecting courses.
 - the speaker is being evasive:
An error was made in the budget.
- 2 a. The passive is used when the patient is more closely related than the agent to the theme of the text (i.e., what it is about):
I was a young Columbia man while I worked in a cafeteria from 6:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. I was much respected by the management, even though I drove the people I worked with insane, because I had standards they couldn't cope with. (Thompson, 1987, p. 503)

The patient *I* in the underlined clause is more thematic than the agent *the management*. In other words, the passive topicalizes the patient or experiencer/undergoer of the action.

Here is another example where the thematic status of the patient and agent is critical to the decision to use the passive:

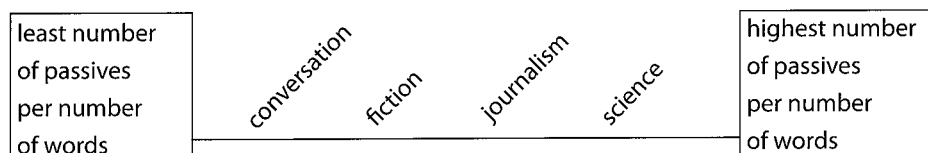
The ends of a spindle were suspended from a bracket protruding to one side of the sledge frame.
We suspended the ends of a spindle from a bracket protruding to one side of the sledge frame.

The first sentence in the passive voice, which has been adapted from Banks (1997), was culled from a corpus of 11 research articles having to do with oceanography. The second sentence is one that Banks constructed. Banks argues that scientists choose to use the passive due not so much to their desire to sound objective as to the fact that the theme of scientific writing deals with the apparatus or results of a study rather than the person conducting the investigation.

- 2 b. The passive is used when the nonagent is a participant in the immediately preceding sentence. Here is an example, taken from *The Explorers of the Mississippi* (p. 145):
Lorenzo arrived in Paris as a down-at-heel political refugee without friends or money; luckily for him, France at that time was ruled by an Italian, Cardinal Mazarin . . .
(Thompson, 1987, p. 506)

In this example, France is not the theme of the passage, but it does relate to Paris in the previous clause. You saw in Chapter 2 how new information is introduced in the rheme of one sentence and then becomes the theme of the next sentence. As we noted at the end of the section on meaning, passive and middle voices are devices that promote this thematic cohesion. Thus, as Thompson (1987) points out, strategies 2a and 2b are related. They are illustrations of the same cohesive principle of thematic unity, with strategy 2a simply applying to a larger stretch of text than strategy 2b. Thompson concludes, “It appears that users of English are content to code the agent as subject unless broadly thematic or more local cross-clausal considerations require an alternative coding” (p. 501).

Not surprisingly, distributions of the passive differ among genres. Where more focus is on the outcome or what happened, such as with scientific or journalistic writing, passives are more frequent than with fictional and conversational English. Pioneering work by Huddleston (1971) and Shintani (1979) attests to this.



It is worth noting that although not as many passives occur in conversations as in written genres, there is a way in informal English to defocus the agent without using the passive voice. Interlocutors often use the nonanaphoric *they* with active voice where the passive would also be possible (Thompson, 1987):

They forecast a snowy winter this year.

A snowy winter was forecast this year.

The *they* is nonanaphoric because it has no antecedent. The exact identity of the agent is unimportant. Thus, the discourse function of the nonanaphoric *they* can be said to overlap partially with agentless passives. This brings us to the question of the conditions governing naming an agent. As we said earlier, reasons for when to use the passive overlap considerably with issues concerning whether or not to mention the agent. This is the other major use issue concerning the passive voice.

AGENTED PASSIVES

Since the function of the passive is to defocus the agent (Shibatani, 1985), we may rightfully inquire as to when the long passive is used; i.e., when the agent does appear. In fact, the answer is that it appears surprisingly infrequently. Most analyses show that only about 15 to 20 percent of the passives occurring in texts explicitly include agents. Because of their infrequency, Shintani (1979) suggests that we teach our ESL/EFL students when and why to retain the agent in those approximately 15 percent of passive sentences that have explicit agents, rather than trying to give them rules for omitting the agent in those 85 percent of passives that are agentless. She examined a large number of agents that were overtly expressed in passive sentences occurring in written and spoken discourse, and she concluded that almost all these agents could be explained by one of three generalizations.

Agented long passives are used:

1. When the agent is new information:

While Jill was walking down the street, her purse was snatched by a young man.

2. When the agent is nonhuman (i.e., we expect agents to be human):
All the lights and appliances in the Albertson household are switched on and off daily by *this electrical device*.
3. When the agent is a well-known personage and should be included as propositional information:
The Mona Lisa was painted by *da Vinci*.

STYLE MANUALS VERSUS REASONS FOR USING THE PASSIVE

Before concluding, we return to one of our pet peeves: style manuals admonishing against using the passive. Such edicts fail to recognize that the passive voice fulfills important functions. In a study of the use of the passive in articles in medical journals, Millar, Budgell, and Fuller (2013) found—contrary to journal style manuals that portray the passive as a stylistic choice that should be avoided because it lacks clarity—that the passive was used in certain sections of the research reports frequently and appropriately.

Examining the use of the passive in a corpus of 1.2+ million words drawn from the top five ranking medical journals (compiled in 2009 by the Centre for Biomedical and Health Linguistics), Millar, Budgell, and Fuller (2013) found the passive voice helpful in the following ways:

- Allowing complex agents with several modifiers to follow the verb in keeping with the principle of “end weight” (Quirk et al., 1985), in which long noun phrases are placed at the end of sentences.

The warm-up programme was developed by medical staff from the Oslo Sport Trauma Research Center and coaching staff from the Norwegian Handball Federation, . . . (BMJ-1-M)

versus this paraphrase, which is more difficult to process:

Medical staff from the Oslo Sports Trauma Research Center and coaching staff from the Norwegian Handball Federation developed the warm-up programme, . . .

- Promoting thematic coherence throughout the text [see Thompson’s (1987) 2a/b examples]
- Permitting the omission of redundant information, here presumably the researcher(s) who had already been introduced:
. . . factors were not statistically significantly associated with increased risk . . . (AIM-3-M)

They also found that the passive was especially frequent in the methodology sections of articles,

. . . responses were recorded on a scale of 1 to 5 . . . (AIM-2-M)

in the introductions to the reports in order to “create a research space” (Swales, 1990, p. 141),

Appropriate trials are needed to explore this possibility. (NEJM-2-D)

and, in the discussion sections as well, where the passive was employed because it especially lends itself to making generalizations.

Pertaining to our point, the authors did find significantly fewer passive constructions in two of the five journals, attributing this finding in part due to the influence of style guidelines regarding use of voice. The authors assert that the active voice can unintentionally draw readers’ attention to the researchers and away from their research findings; therefore, the authors call for the creation of new style guidelines to reflect the complexities of using the passive and active voice.

Finally in a similar vein regarding motivating the passive, Baratta (2009) argues that while the passive voice has traditionally been thought of as contributing to an overall objective tone in academic writing, it actually can be used to reveal writer stance (i.e., the ways in

which writers reveal their opinions, evaluations, and feelings on a given matter). As Hyland (2002) observes, “Academic prose is not completely impersonal . . . writers gain credibility by projecting an identity invested with individual authority, displaying confidence in their evaluations and commitment to their ideas” (p. 1091).

Baratta (2009) gives an example from the writing of an English-speaking student:

During my childhood, and even to this day, there has always been a strong emphasis placed on how I ‘should’ speak by my immediate family. My idiolect has been greatly moulded by their influence, mostly in a linguistically speaking, ‘positive’ way. (p. 1416)

and offers this interpretation of the writer’s stance:

By referencing “their influence,” the writer is making it clear that it is familial pressure, not personal desire, which led her to change how she speaks. However, by incorporating this information within a passive sentence, emphasis is given to such pressure and in the process, her disagreement with this. Though she references a “positive” change, it is implied within the context of the essay that she does not necessarily appreciate the changes she has had to make. (p. 1416)

Clearly, helping students to see reasons why the passive is the preferred voice at a given time is more useful than a style guideline that advises writers to avoid its use entirely.

Conclusion

Early transformational grammar accounts and many ESL/EFL texts tended to treat the passive voice as if it were a syntactic variant of the active voice. We have attempted to argue against this characterization of the passive. In fact, use of the two voices is motivated by different reasons. One would find a passive in a discourse for which an active voice sentence would not be appropriate. Similarly, there are times when the middle voice is more appropriate than either the active or the passive. Learning when to use the passive is the greatest learning challenge for ESL/EFL students, who will tend to overuse or underuse it with respect to its use in English, depending on its frequency of occurrence and its functions in their native languages. Therefore, it is better from the start to introduce the passive as a grammatical construction with a particular use of its own.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** Willis (1994) suggests that since the *be* + past participle pattern will be familiar to students from the pattern for copular verbs followed by adjectives, this pattern can be used as a starting point for teaching students the passive voice. Ask students to look around the room and choose five objects. Then they are to ask classmates what they are made of. For example, the first student asks:

A: What is the desk made of?

The second student answers and asks a question of her own, and so forth:

B: The desk is made of wood.

B: What are the windows made of?

C: The windows are made of glass.

C: What are the chairs made of?

D: The chairs are made of plastic and metal.

D: What is the blackboard made of?

Next, to introduce the passive, ask students to talk among themselves about what they are wearing or carrying with them and where it was made. For example:

My shoes were made in Italy.

My blouse was made in the Philippines.

My cell phone was made in Finland.

To reinforce the dynamic sense of the second set of statements, you can point out to students that the second set of sentences is used in the past tense and can be followed by a *by* phrase with the agent or doer of the action.

My shoes were made in Italy by shoemakers.

However, the sentences in the first set cannot be followed by the agent because the past participle is being used adjectivally—that is, to describe the state of the object, not the result of a process:

*The desk is made of wood by furniture makers.

2. **Form.** (present perfect passive) Ask students to close their eyes. Change five things about the room. Ask students to open their eyes and to guess what changes have been made. For example:

The lights have been turned off.

The desk has been cleared off.

The chair has been turned upside down.

3. **Form.** (past passive) Have students play the card game “Concentration.” Make 12 pairs of cards. On one card of each pair, put the name of a famous painter, author, or inventor. On the other card in the pair, put the name of the painting, book, or invention for which the person is famous. Make up pairs of cards such as the following:

Agatha Christie

Murder on the Orient Express

Beethoven

the *Moonlight Sonata*

Shakespeare

Romeo and Juliet

Alexander Graham Bell

the telephone

Picasso

Guernica

Give each small group of students a deck of cards that has been shuffled and ask them to place the cards face down. Students should take turns. The first student should turn over 2 cards. If the cards match, the student should make an active or passive sentence—an active voice sentence if the agent was the first card that the student turned over, or a passive voice sentence if the agent was the second card. If the student is able to make a match and a correct sentence, he or she keeps the pair of cards and can turn over another pair. If not, both cards are turned face down again, and it is the next student’s turn to try. The game continues until all the pairs have been matched. The student with the most matched pairs wins the game. Then students can make up their own pairs.

4. **Form/Meaning.** To have students practice the *get*-passive in its adversative use, tell students to imagine that they are children. They have had some friends over. The friends have left, but the place is a mess. Their parents have returned, and the “children” have to explain what happened. Give students a list of problems to explain or have them brainstorm a list themselves. Have them role-play the parent-child interaction. For example:

Parent: What happened to the curtain?

Child: It got stepped on.

Parent: And what happened to the rug?

Child: It got spilled on.

5. **Meaning.** Show students two photographs of the same place—one taken many years ago and one taken recently. Ask them to say what changes have occurred. Then ask them to predict what changes they think will occur in the future:

A new highway was opened.
New houses will be built.

6. **Meaning.** To familiarize students with change-of-state verbs, have them conduct or imagine conducting an experiment that demonstrates that water evaporates when heated and condenses when cooled. Have them write up or talk through the steps of the experiment.
7. **Use.** Kim and McDonough (2008) report that Korean EFL learners from three levels of English proficiency increased their use of the passive voice when they interacted with a researcher who used a number of passives in a picture description activity. This is known as a *priming effect*, where participants produce more of a certain construction, prompted by what their interlocutor does. See if you can get a similar priming effect with your students. The immediate use of passive correctly in context might help scaffold their independent use later on.
8. **Use.** Ask students to pretend that they are newspaper reporters. They have been called to the scene of a fire. Describe the scene to them, or have them imagine one of their own. Ask them to write a newspaper account of the incident. For example:
- Late last night, a fire broke out at 212 Main Street. All of the people who lived there were rescued, but unfortunately, two pets were killed by the smoke. Firefighters were called shortly before midnight. When they arrived...
9. **Use.** Find a short article on science from a publication such as *Science News*. Ask students to read the article, locate the passive sentences, and say why they think the author used the passive. Also, they should try to explain why an agent was mentioned, if applicable.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide an original sentence illustrating each of the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples:
- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| a. active voice | e. a verb that is always passive |
| b. passive voice | f. a verb that is never passive |
| c. passive voice with agent | g. middle voice (with ergative verb) |
| d. the <i>get</i> -passive | h. an intransitive verb with a nonagent subject |
2. Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences:
- The report is being studied by the committee.
 - The work isn't going to be completed on time.
 - Was the play written by O'Neill?
 - John got arrested after the robbery.

3. *Why are the following sentences ungrammatical or at least questionable?*
- *Horace will be had tested on his Spanish proficiency.
 - *Two liters were contained by the bottle.
 - *In the bus was eaten a sandwich by Bill.
 - ?Some cars were bought by the customer.
4. *When there are two be verbs in a row in a passive sentence, one of them is passive. Which one is the passive be, and how do you know?*

The food for the festival has been being prepared for days.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

5. *Examine the directions following the examples in Teaching Suggestion 3. Explain why the passive was used in the "Concentration" game.*
6. *Why do you think that ESL/EFL students produced the following? How will you help your students?*
- *I born in Seoul in 1970.
 - *The song was sang several times by the choir.
 - *Argentina was slowed down its inflation.
 - *She got hurted by his remarks.
 - *My cat must have been died by a car.
 - *It was disappeared two weeks ago.
7. *In light of what has been discussed in this chapter, see if you can account for the difference between the following pairs of verbs, which are infamous for causing problems to native speakers of English.*

rise raise

lie lay

sit seat

8. *One of your students asks you to distinguish between be married and get married. What would you say? How about have married and have been married?*
9. *The length of the by phrase affects the choice of active or passive. Remember, though, that we are looking for reasons to give our students. What is the reason for a lengthy by phrase, and how does its length affect a decision to use the passive? Here is an example, cited in Gilbert (1992):*

That night, on the journey to the Skagit village, he was wakened in his blanket by the dark force of something he had heard and neglected to consider. (Dillard, *A Trip to the Mountains*, Harper's, August 1991)

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

To trace the evolution of the *get*-passive:

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For pedagogical suggestions, see:

- Cake, C. D. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 5*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Carlisi, K. (2008). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 3*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Frodesen, J., & Eyring, J. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 4* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Houck, N., & Hilles, S. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 4*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Thewlis, S. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 3* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Wisniewska, I., Riggenbach, H., & Samuda, V. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 2* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For pedagogical suggestions, particularly for teaching ergative verbs, see:

- Pennington, M. (Ed.). (1995). *New ways in teaching grammar*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

Endnotes

1. This rule works to account for the structure of most passive sentences. It does fail, however, to produce passive imperatives, which are rare but possible in English (Quirk et al., 1985), although it could be argued that *seated* is an adjective participle:

Be seated.

If we were to move -imper up into the curly brackets with T and M, we could account for passive imperatives, but other problems would arise. For now, therefore, we will stick with this rendition of the phrase structure rule.

2. We give two examples with progressive passives in the list here. Warner (1995) shows that the progressive passive is relatively new to English, the first attested instance appearing in the latter half of the eighteenth century. He goes on to claim that the progressive passive did not originate from the merging of the passive voice with progressive aspect, but rather resulted from other changes in the auxiliary.
3. Notice that in the sentence *Butch Cassidy was wanted by the law*, *want* has a special meaning (i.e. the authorities were searching for Butch Cassidy).
4. The reason that we say *certain* stative verbs do not take the passive voice is that some stative verbs that involve mental states passivize easily, such as *The answer is believed to be correct* and *Donald Trump is thought to have a lot of money*.

Sentences with Indirect Objects

Introduction

Sentences with indirect objects provide an excellent opportunity for seeing how a construction itself carries meaning. The prototypical sentence with an indirect object, as briefly mentioned in Chapters 2 and 6, has three noun arguments—one is the subject; the other two, following a ditransitive verb, are the indirect object and the direct object. This ditransitive or double-object construction, subject—verb—indirect object—direct object, conveys the meaning of transfer. English sentences with indirect objects signal particular types of transfer (or, if negative, the prevention of transfer), depending on the type of verb used. Verbs with transfer senses that involve giving, creating, or communicating something to someone are often found in double-object constructions.

| | | <i>Indirect Object</i> | <i>Direct Object</i> |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| (giving) | Sonia gave | Kate | a kiss. |
| (creating) | Sonia made | Kate | a bookcase. |
| (communicating) | Sonia asked | Kate | a question. |

The same three relationships can be captured by a prepositional object construction, where the objects are reversed and a preposition is put before the indirect object.

| | | <i>Direct Object</i> | <i>Indirect Object</i> |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| (giving) | Sonia gave | a kiss | to Kate. |
| (creating) | Sonia made | a bookcase | for Kate. |
| (communicating) | Sonia asked | a question | of Kate. |

Traditional grammar tells us that the indirect object precedes the direct object and tells us *to whom*, *for whom*, or *of whom* the action of the verb is done. Admittedly, there are far fewer indirect objects with the third meaning than there are the first two.¹ We will discuss both double-object and prepositional constructions in the pages that follow.²

Furthermore, many verbs taking both a direct and indirect object have a second option: in the active voice, the subject is the agent of the action (*Sonia gave a kiss to Kate.*). However,

in the passive voice, either the direct object (or *patient*) or the indirect object (or *recipient*) can serve as the subject:

A kiss was given to Kate (by Sonia).

Kate was given a kiss (by Sonia).

Having both direct and indirect objects as subjects of passive sentences is not possible in many of the world's languages. In addition to learning these new sentence patterns, ESL/EFL students will have to learn which English verbs take indirect objects and which verbs do not. For instance, they will understandably say

***He said me the answer.**

analogous to a verb that has a similar meaning:

He told me the answer.

Then, for those students who speak languages, like French and Spanish, which let indirect objects freely follow the verb, they will say things like

***Ben opened me the door.**

instead of

Ben opened the door for me.

ESL/EFL students will also have to learn where the objects, both direct and indirect, are placed in relation to the subject and verb and in relation to each other. In a cross-linguistic study of ditransitive constructions, Malchukov, Haspelmath, and Comrie (2010) state that in the languages of the world, both objects tend to occur next to each other, on the same side of the verb. Nevertheless, such a generalization still results in six different possibilities drawn from their cross-linguistic data:

| <i>Basic Order</i> | <i>Indirect-Direct Order</i> | <i>Direct-Indirect Order</i> |
|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| SVO | SV IO DO | SV DO IO |
| SOV | S IO DO V | S DO IO V |
| VSO | V S IO DO | V S DO IO |

The Form of Sentences with Indirect Objects

THE ARGUMENT STRUCTURE OF VERBS TAKING INDIRECT OBJECTS

Recall from Chapter 3 that the argument structure of a verb concerns the number of nouns (arguments) that a verb takes and their relationship to the verb.

Verbs That Require an Indirect Object

For some ditransitive verbs, the indirect object is indispensable to the meaning and the structure of the sentence. It is required in both the double-object construction and the prepositional construction; for example:

***Dan gave a kitten.³**

Dan gave { **Mel a kitten**
a kitten to Mel }.

***Morgan handed the letter.**

Morgan handed { **Peter the letter**
the letter to Peter }.

*Verbs with Optional Prepositional Indirect Objects*⁴

In the previous two examples with *give* and *hand*, the indirect object is closely associated with the meaning of the sentence as a whole and the verb phrase in particular. In contrast, there are also cases in which the indirect object is optional, both structurally and semantically. Without the indirect object, the sentence is still complete. The two following sentences, for example, have optional indirect objects that seem much less closely related to the rest of the sentence than those in the two immediately preceding examples:

Sonia made a bookcase (for Kate).

The teller cashed the check (for me).

Verbs with Implied Indirect Objects

There are also many cases where the indirect object is not structurally essential, but where it is strongly implied and thus seems to be present semantically. In addition, the meaning of these sentences does not change markedly if the indirect object is not overtly expressed; for example:

Sam sold his car. (i.e., to someone)

Barbara asked a question. (i.e., of someone)

Verbs with Optional Indirect Objects

There are also cases where an indirect object seems to be optionally added to sentences to indicate that there is a specific recipient of the action involving the direct object (this is often the speaker or a group including the speaker, but it could also include the addressee):

Go find (me) a pencil.

Grab (yourself) a seat.

Get (us) a bumper sticker.

Verbs with Obligatory versus Deletable Direct Objects

As a related matter, we must also consider the role of the direct object in sentences that contain both a direct and an indirect object. First, there are cases where the direct object cannot be deleted in either the double-object or prepositional construction; for example:

Dan gave Mel the kitten.

***Dan gave Mel. (≠ donate)**

Dan gave the kitten to Mel.

***Dan gave to Mel. (≠ donate)**

In such cases, both the direct and indirect object are interdependent, indispensable elements in the sentence. In other cases, the direct object can be deleted, but only in double-object constructions, where the indirect object comes directly after the verb and before the understood direct object.

We paid the money to Harry.

***We paid to Harry.**

We paid Harry (the money).

Furthermore, there are prepositional constructions in which the direct object can be deleted, but the preposition preceding the indirect object must be retained. If the preposition is not retained, the meaning of the sentence changes, since the direct object is a required or understood constituent and the indirect object is optional or additional (i.e., the indirect object is reinterpreted as a direct object when it is the only object in postverbal position):

Sara cooks (dinner) for us. ≠ ?Sara cooks us.

In such instances, we can say that the direct object is implied whether overtly stated or not, and the indirect object is not as closely linked to the meaning of the verb as it was in the two preceding cases with *give* and *pay*.

SUBCATEGORIZATION OF VERBS THAT TAKE DOUBLE-OBJECT AND PREPOSITIONAL OBJECTS

Many common English verbs can take objects in different syntactic configurations.

| SUBCATEGORIES OF VERBS THAT TAKE DOUBLE-OBJECT AND PREPOSITIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS | | |
|--|--|---|
| Both postverbal (double-object or ditransitive) and prepositional positions | Only in prepositional position | Only in postverbal (double-object or ditransitive) position |
| Bea gave Al the idea. Bea gave the idea to Al. | *Bea explained Al the idea. Bea explained the idea to Al. | Bea begrudged Al the idea. *Bea begrudged the idea to Al. |
| Others: <i>hand, tell, pass, sell, send, get, show, throw, lend, teach, read, offer, fax, write, bring</i> | Others: <i>donate, announce, recommend, reveal, confess, introduce, describe, transmit, report</i> | Others: <i>bill, cost, (over)charge, bet, excuse, envy, forbid, fine, spare, forgive, allow, permit, wish</i> |

There are several patterns here that may be helpful when pointed out to learners. First of all, notice that the verbs in the first column are almost all monosyllabic. Such verbs are generally of Germanic origin. These are the verbs that allow both syntactic patterns. Latinate verbs, such as those found in the second column, are longer than one syllable, and tend not to allow indirect objects in postverbal position. It is not likely that students will know the origin of the verbs; however, their length is an important clue. It doesn't always work, of course, (e.g., *offer* in the first column is two syllables), and even young native speakers of English initially overextend the pattern (e.g., *"Don't say me that!"), presumably because *say* is semantically similar to other verbs on the list, and it is monosyllabic.

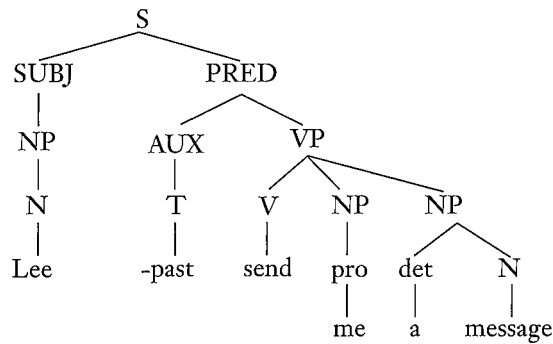
Another pattern has been pointed out by Coppock (2009). It pertains to verbs in the third column. Coppock notes that in double-object constructions with this type of verb, "the candidate for serving as an indirect object either loses something or is in danger of losing something" (p. 62). (For example: *He charged/fined me \$50.*) However, this observation doesn't account for other verbs in this category, such as *forgive, allow, wish, and permit*.

If this seems complicated, we should take heart that users of English do learn these constructions, and later learn to use the constructions productively, extending them to novel verbs; e.g., "I cc'ed everyone the announcement" and "I texted the apology to John" (Yang, 2010, p. 1172), an extension which illustrates the dynamics of language innovation and change, which builds on the meaning of transfer inherent in the construction itself.

THE SYNTAX OF SENTENCES WITH INDIRECT OBJECTS

Even if verbs are properly subcategorized, we still need to account for indirect objects in different ways, depending on the argument structure that the verb supports. For verbs that either permit or require the immediate postverbal position for indirect objects, the following structure applies:

Lee sent me a message.



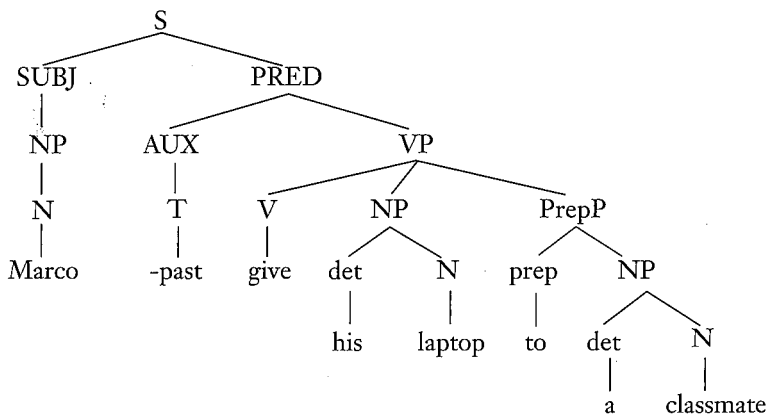
This structure also works for sentences like

The book cost me a fortune.

The usher handed me a program.

For verbs that require an indirect object and either permit or require the indirect object to occur after the direct object in a prepositional phrase, the following structure applies:

Marco gave his laptop to a classmate.



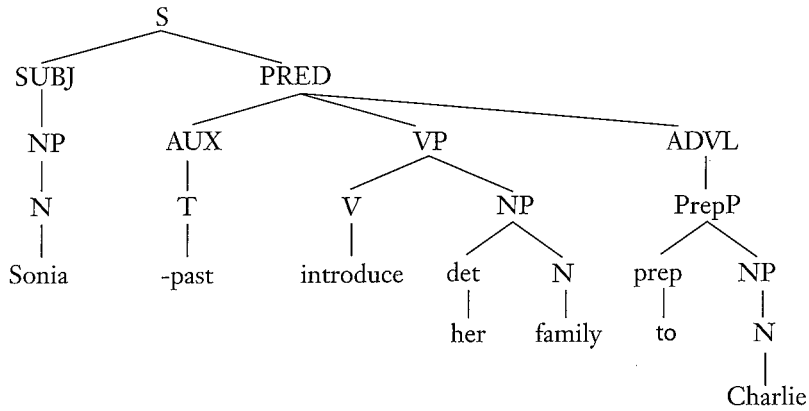
The structure also works for sentences like

Mr. Smith offered the job to the candidate.

He left his money to a foundation.

Finally, for verbs that optionally allow but do not require prepositional indirect objects in order to complete their argument structure, the following structure applies:

Sonia introduced her family to Charlie.



This structure also works for sentences like

The teacher explained the problem to the students.

The magician performed a trick for us.

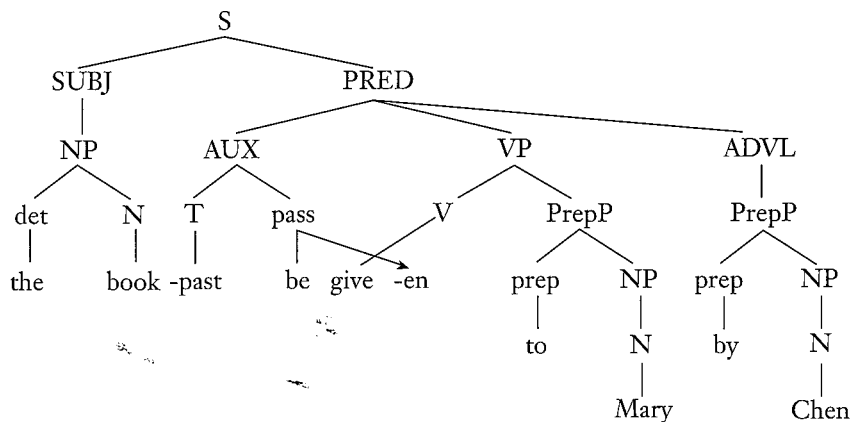
The politician broke the news to her constituents.

Besides accounting for the different argument structure that these verbs enter into, the syntactic differences between the last two constructions become helpful in understanding whether or not the indirect object can function as the subject of a passive voice sentence.

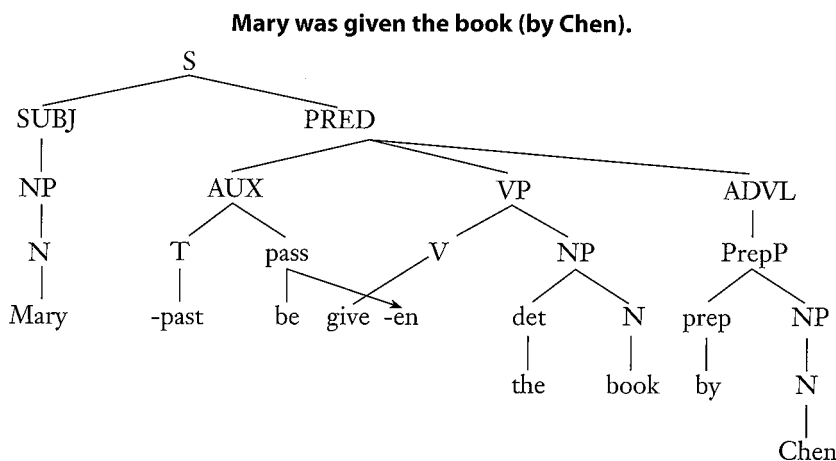
SENTENCES WITH INDIRECT OBJECTS IN THE PASSIVE VOICE

We have already noted that English has more passive voice alternatives for sentences with indirect objects than some other languages do. Thus, the active voice sentence "Chen gave Mary the book," has two passive voice paraphrases; one option selects the direct object as the subject of the passive:

The book was given to Mary (by Chen).⁵



The other option selects the indirect object as the subject of the passive:



Some languages resist selecting the indirect object as the subject of a passive sentence. For example, the literal translation of “Mary was given the book (by Chen)” would be ungrammatical in German. (In German, the direct object or accusative case can become the nominative subject of the passive; however, the dative case cannot.) Students coming from such language backgrounds will need practice in forming English passive sentences where indirect objects function as subjects.

Not all sentences containing indirect objects allow two passive paraphrases as readily as the preceding one. When indirect objects are structurally optional constituents in an active sentence, they do not easily serve as the subject of a passive sentence. For example, the active sentence “Mary revealed the truth to Ken” readily accepts the direct object as subject of a passive counterpart:

The truth was revealed to Ken (by Mary).

However, many speakers of English find that if the indirect object is the subject of the passive, the sentence becomes awkward if not ungrammatical:

?Ken was revealed the truth (by Mary).

You might speculate that since *reveal* does not permit postverbal indirect objects, this may account for the questionable nature of the passive sentence above. However, there are also cases where the active voice counterpart permits alternation:

Arlene made Sandra this dress.

Arlene made this dress for Sandra.

And the passive counterpart with the direct object as subject is fully acceptable:

This dress was made for Sandra (by Arlene).

But still, the version with the indirect object as subject is much more questionable (although several speakers of British English have told us that this sentence is acceptable in their dialect):

?Sandra was made this dress (by Arlene).

In sum, in those sentences where the indirect object is an obligatory component of a ditransitive verb, the indirect object is readily able to serve as the subject in the passive voice; however, in those sentences where the indirect object is optional—that is, the verb is transitive and requires only a direct object—the indirect object cannot readily serve as the subject of the passive (in American English, at least).

Meaning Issues with Indirect Objects

THE MEANING OF VERB-INDIRECT OBJECT COMBINATIONS

As we wrote in the introduction, the indirect object construction conveys a meaning of transfer. More specific meanings follow from the meaning of the verbs that enter into the construction. Verbs that take indirect objects can be placed into three semantic groups: dative verbs such as *give*, benefactive verbs such as *make*, and eliciting verbs such as *ask*. In prepositional constructions, these verbs appear with different prepositions.⁶ ESL/EFL students would learn, then, that they must select *to* + NP in the case of the dative verbs (*give, say, sell, explain, etc.*), *for* + NP in the case of the benefactive verbs (*make, buy, cook, prepare, etc.*), and *of* + NP in the case of the eliciting verbs (*ask, request, etc.*). The dative verbs compose the largest category, the eliciting verbs the smallest. Of course, students must learn to take into account the meaning of the verb as it is used in sentences because some verbs will occur in more than one of these semantic categories, depending on how they are used; however, in such cases two different meanings of the verb form are involved; for example:

I'll get this to him. (dative) = "deliver"

I'll get this for him. (benefactive) = "fetch, obtain"

Recent analyses of double-object constructions have gone beyond focusing solely on the semantics of the verb. For example, Croft (2012) states that the semantics of verbs in these constructions can be explained by taking into account three components: (1) the core meaning of the verb; (2) the meaning of "transferred possession," which is associated with the verb when it occurs in the double-object construction; and (3) the type of possession indicated (e.g., actual, conditional, or intended).

To see how these components inform an interpretation, consider the verb *bake*. It can appear in a construction with just one object: *Sarah bakes her own bread*. Once it appears in the double-object construction, it takes on the meaning of transferred possession. In *Sarah baked me a birthday cake*, possession of the cake is being transferred from the agent, *Sarah*, to the recipient, *me*. Notice, however, that the possession is intended, not actual (*Sarah baked me a birthday cake, but her roommates ate it before she could give it to me.*)

We will look at both verbs and constructions more closely when we discuss specific classes of verbs and constructions associated with them.

The Ambiguity of For Phrases

One related point to consider is that sentences with prepositional objects preceded by *for*, such as the following, may be ambiguous:

Yasu bought the book for me.

There are two possible interpretations of this sentence:

Proxy: **Yasu bought it for me (i.e., he acted on my behalf) because I didn't have time to buy it myself.**

Benefactive: **Yasu bought it for me because my birthday was coming up and he wanted to give me a gift.**

However, if the indirect object occurs in the double-object construction (i.e., *Yasu bought me the book.*), only the benefactive interpretation seems to be possible.

This double meaning of *for* helps explain why the indirect object can come immediately after the verb *open* in the first sentence (where *for* is benefactive and transfer of possession occurs) but not in the second:

Benefactive: **Open me a beer, please.**

(The addressee will presumably open a can/bottle of beer and give it to the speaker.)

Proxy: **Open the door for me, please.**

***Open me the door.**

(The addressee does not give the door to the speaker, but merely opens the door on his/her behalf.)

Semantics of Verbs Followed by Indirect Objects

As we have seen, the essential meaning of a double-object construction is to transfer something to someone. There are a number of ways that this basic meaning is manifest, in what Goldberg (1995) calls “constructional subsenses,” depending on the meaning of the verb (pp. 38, 148–149).

THE MEANING OF VERBS IN DOUBLE-OBJECT CONSTRUCTIONS (GOLDBERG, 1995)

| 1 | Verb Class | Examples | Constructional Subsenses |
|----|--|---|--|
| 1a | Verbs that inherently signify acts of giving | <i>give, pass, hand, serve, feed</i> | X causes Y to receive Z |
| 1b | Verbs of instantaneous causation of ballistic motion | <i>throw, toss, kick</i> | (same as 1a) |
| 1c | Verbs of continuous causation in a deictically specified direction | <i>bring, take</i> | (same as 1a) |
| 2 | Verbs of giving with associated satisfaction conditions | <i>guarantee, promise, owe</i> | Conditions of satisfaction imply that X causes Y to receive Z |
| 3 | Verbs of refusal | <i>refuse, deny</i> | X causes Y not to receive Z |
| 4 | Verbs of future transfer | <i>leave, bequeath, allocate, reserve, grant</i> | X acts to cause Y to receive Z at some future point in time |
| 5 | Verbs of permission | <i>permit, allow</i> | X enables Y to receive Z |
| 6a | Verbs of creation | <i>bake, make, build, cook, sew, knit</i> | X intends to cause Y to receive Z |
| 6b | Verbs of obtaining | <i>get, grab, buy, win, earn</i> | (same as 6a) |
| 7a | Verbs of (verbal) communication | <i>tell, ask, teach, quote, write, cite, fax, telephone, wire</i> | Metaphorical extension: Messages are entities which are transferred from one person to another |
| 7b | Verbs of showing | <i>show</i> | Metaphorical extension: Perceiving is receiving ⁷ |

Of course, there are also many verbs semantically related to one of these categories that do not take an immediate postverbal indirect object because the verb concerned takes only prepositional indirect objects:

- (communication) ***She announced them the news.**
 She announced the news to them.
- (showing) ***She revealed the police her friend's whereabouts.**
 She revealed her friend's whereabouts to the police.
- (creation) ***He decorated her the room.**
 He decorated the room for her.

In these cases, the etymology and syllable structure of the verbs concerned seem to override their semantic properties. Subtle differences in meaning may explain why some verbs occur in both the postverbal and the prepositional constructions and some occur only in prepositional constructions. As noted previously, the use of *open* in *Open the door for me* does not imply transfer of possession, so the double-object construction is not possible. Different semantic nuances can also explain why *heave someone a suitcase* is acceptable but *lift someone a suitcase* is not. Pinker (2007) states that verbs like *heave*, *pass*, and *slide* indicate the instantaneous imparting of force, while verbs like *lift*, *drag*, and *hoist* indicate the continuous application of force. Hence, verbs with similar meanings, syllabic structures, and origins may still differ enough in meaning to allow the postverbal construction in one case and prohibit it in another.

Semantics Governing Postverbal Position for Indirect Objects

Going beyond the semantic categorization of verbs to the interpretation of sentences, Goldsmith (1980) and Stowell (1981) have proposed that postverbal position for indirect objects is limited semantically to cases where the indirect object is “animate” and is a “projected possessor” of the direct object. Thus, we can explain the acceptable and unacceptable alternations in the following set:

- a. **Joe sent a letter to Sue.**
- b. **Joe sent Sue a letter.**
- c. **Joe sent a letter to Cincinnati.**
- d. ***Joe sent Cincinnati a letter.**

In b, *Sue* is the animate, projected possessor of the letter, whereas in d, *Cincinnati* is merely the location of the letter, though this sentence may be acceptable if *Cincinnati* is a shortened form for an office or business in Cincinnati. Although this is a good rule of thumb, it is not without exception. Sometimes it depends on the semantics of the verb. For instance, if the verb *give* means to assign a score, it can take an inanimate possessor, e.g., *I'd give it a 7 out of 10* (Bresnan, Cueni, Nikitina, & Baayen, 2007).

Issues of Use

EXPLANATIONS FOR INDIRECT OBJECT ALTERNATION

We have already given several examples in this chapter of the alternation of the indirect object in postverbal or prepositional position. In this section, we will discuss the function of indirect object alternation.

Erteschik-Shir (1979) has proposed a discourse principle, which is useful for understanding the function of indirect object alternation. It is the concept of *dominance*. Basically, a dominant

constituent in a sentence is the one that a speaker has chosen to highlight, to call to his or her listener's attention. Providing new rather than given information, it is this constituent in a sentence that will probably be the topic of further conversation if there is to be any. Thus, in the string:

$$V \quad NP1 \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} to \\ for \\ of \end{array} \right\} \quad NP2$$

NP2 (i.e., the indirect object) is the dominant noun phrase. If the speaker wants to give prominence to NP1 (the direct object) instead, an alternate pattern is selected, if lexically possible, and NP2 precedes NP1, allowing NP1 to be the dominant noun phrase (the preposition drops out in this case).

$$V \quad NP2 \quad NP1$$

Let's illustrate both scenarios. The only context where making the indirect object dominant

Pass the salt to me, please.

V NP1 to NP2

would be appropriate is one in which the speaker's request is directed to a listener who is (1) holding a salt shaker and (2) obviously not knowing to whom to pass it. The listener might then reply, "Oh, I heard the request for the salt, but I didn't know who said it." Most contexts define the important part of the sentence as being the speaker's desire for salt, and therefore one more frequently hears:

Pass me the salt, please.

V NP2 NP1

or—since the speaker is generally the indirect object by implication—simply:

Pass the salt, please.

If the person who complies with this request says anything at all, he or she would be likely to comment upon the direct object—the salt—not upon the one who initiated the request; that is, "Sure. Here it is."⁸

CONDITIONS ON INDIRECT OBJECT ALTERNATION

The notion of dominance and the distinction between new and given information help us understand why certain conditions such as the following are placed on indirect object alternation:

1. For many dialects of English (though not all), the indirect object cannot be postverbal if the direct object is a pronoun (especially *it*) and the indirect object is a noun:

We sent it to Doug.

***We sent Doug it.⁹**

On the other hand, when the indirect object is a pronoun and the direct object is a noun (especially an indefinite one), the alternate pattern (the double-object construction) is likely to be selected:

We sent him a package.

These observations can be explained by noting that, as a rule, pronouns are less dominant than nouns and refer to given information. Since pronouns usually have an anaphoric referent or a referent in the immediate physical environment, it is unlikely that a speaker would need to direct attention to them—their meaning is already clear from the text or context. This is not to say that an indirect object that is a pronoun would never occupy the dominant position, but when this does occur, a different interpretation would be necessary—for example, a contrastive one.

We sent a package to *him*. (not *her*)

It is important to remember that the semantics of the verb must be taken into consideration. In their corpus study, Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004) found that *give* tends to favor the double-object construction, whereas *bring* tends to prefer prepositional objects and *send* tends to alternate between the two constructions. Bresnan, Cueni, Nikitina, and Baayen (2007) report that in their corpus data, the verb *bring* is nearly three times more likely to have a recipient that is given than the verb *take*, while *take* is over seven times more likely to have a recipient that has not been previously identified than *bring*—even though the two verbs belong to the same broad semantic class of transfer of possession. They add that this may be because of the differing points of view implied by the two verbs: the goal of bringing is usually located near the speaker, making it more likely that the recipient is given information while the goal of taking is usually located away from the speaker, making it more likely to be new information.

2. According to Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999), constructions in which both the direct and indirect object are pronouns occur primarily in conversation and fiction, as opposed to news and academic writing.

We sent him (‘im) it. (acceptable to most if the indirect object is phonologically reduced)

Furthermore, in conversation, if both objects are pronouns, they are over twice as likely to be found in prepositional constructions than in double-object constructions.

We sent it to him.

3. If the direct object is a long complex phrase or clause (i.e., dominant), a postverbal indirect object is necessary to avoid awkwardness:

?/*I told that he would be coming to John's girlfriend.

I told John's girlfriend that he would be coming.

Clauses are always more dominant than NPs and generally provide new information, so the clausal direct object occurs at the end of the sentence. On the other hand, if the indirect object is heavily modified, postverbal position is less likely:

I bought a present for my new little niece, the first daughter of my eldest brother.

?/*I bought my new little niece, the first daughter of my eldest brother, a present.

The speaker who elaborates either the direct or indirect object has already given it dominance. Such objects, therefore, occur in the dominant final position if the verb permits the preferred order.

In their corpus study of the ditransitive verbs *give*, *offer*, and *tell*, Biber et al. (1999) found that in double-object constructions, the indirect object was much shorter than it was in prepositional constructions. In fact, in 85 percent of the cases, the indirect object in the double-object construction consisted of only one word (most likely a pronoun). The converse was found for the direct object, which was two or more words in length in 85 percent of the double-object cases.

The results for prepositional constructions did not show such a striking difference: In 45 percent of the cases, the prepositional indirect object was one word long and in 55 percent of the cases, it was two or more words long. The direct object was one word long in 55 percent of the examples and two or more words long in 45 percent of the examples.

Nonetheless, Biber et al.'s (1999) results for these three representative ditransitive verbs show that indirect objects tend to be longer when they are in prepositional constructions and direct objects are longer when they are in double-object constructions. Biber et al.'s findings clearly lend support for the observation that longer constituents are commonly found at the ends of sentences, in keeping with their dominance or “end weight.”

4. The main verb must belong to the class of verbs permitting both postverbal and prepositional position for indirect objects. (i.e., the verbs in the first column in the table on page 376).

We should note here that some of those verbs that occur only in prepositional constructions still allow the prepositional indirect object to precede the direct object, especially if the latter is elaborated (e.g., it is a clause, or it is several phrases long). In such a case, however, the indirect object always retains its preposition so we know that some stylistic option other than indirect object alternation has occurred in such cases:

They mentioned the new restaurant on Putney Road to me.

***They mentioned me the new restaurant on Putney Road.**

They mentioned to me the new restaurant on Putney Road.

Authentic examples of this stylistic option are rare and almost always occur in writing rather than speech (Williams, 1994).

5. Lakoff (1969) notes that in conjoined sentences, there are also constraints on indirect object alternation. If the verb is deleted in the second sentence, both sentences must have their indirect objects in the same position:

I gave Ann a laptop, and Jan a tablet.

?I gave Ann a laptop, and a tablet to Jan.

I gave a laptop to Ann, and a tablet to Jan.

?I gave a laptop to Ann, and Jan a tablet.

In other words, the constructions have to be parallel to be stylistically appropriate.

Where Is the Indirect Object Most Likely to Occur?

Researchers examining the use of the double-object constructions in different genres have found the postverbal construction occurs more often in spoken data and the prepositional construction more often in written data (Bresnan et al., 2007; Siewierska, 2013). In support of there being more prepositional constructions in writing, Deshors (2014) notes that “prepositional dative constructions serve as default constructions when grammatical contexts are more complex and therefore more cognitively taxing. This view is mainly based on the findings that prepositional constructions are systematically found with factors that are harder to process such as new recipients, passive voice, longer patients and longer recipients” (p. 302). It could also be that speakers favor common monosyllabic words of Germanic origin while writers also incorporate more multisyllabic Latinate words. Another possible explanation is that the verbs and constructions that evoke the sense of transfer are used more in speaking than in writing.

Alternation in Varieties of English

Deshors (2014) used a multifactorial analysis of corpus data to investigate dative use in three World Englishes (Hong Kong, Indian, and Singapore English), two varieties of learner English (French and German learners), and native British English. Specifically, she was interested in whether the speakers of different varieties of English relied on different grammatical features in their choice of whether to use double-object or prepositional-object constructions with the verb *give*. She examined 11 semantic and morphological factors (e.g., voice, patient animacy, length of the recipient, etc.) to determine which factors most influenced their choices. Her results showed that factors involved in using double-object and prepositional dative constructions interact differently in the different varieties. Those factors that contributed most to syntactic variation across the varieties were recipient accessibility (i.e., whether the recipient was given or new), length of recipient and patient, and voice.

Conclusion

As we have seen many times before, the more closely we examine a construction, the more complicated it seems to become. As usual, more research is needed; for example: is there a better principle (or set of principles) to help us determine which verbs allow indirect object alternation and which do not?

In the meantime, it would seem sensible to bear in mind the following three learning challenges: (1) whether verbs take dative, benefactive, or eliciting indirect objects; (2) which verbs do—and which do not—allow both indirect object constructions, and (3) the possible passive variants of sentences with indirect objects. It will also be helpful if you can give your students some understanding of the discourse principle of dominance and the placement of given and new information so that they have a *reason* that will give them guidance when trying to decide whether to put the indirect object in postverbal position or in a prepositional construction in cases where both constructions are possible.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form/Use.** To develop your students' sense of when indirect object alternation is appropriate or inappropriate, group them in pairs to manipulate and discuss sentences with words such as the following written on cards or strips. Then ask students to decide whether or not the *to* can be deleted and what any subsequent word order changes would be.

John gave it to Mr. Jones

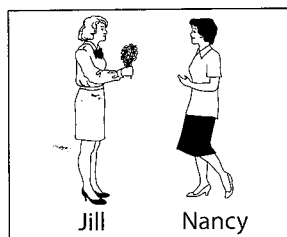
John gave the new password to me

Mary described the movie to me

Sam told that the meeting was postponed to us

This exercise can also be done very effectively with the entire class by using a document projector.

2. **Use.** Sketch pictures, clip pictures from magazines, or find images online that naturally elicit indirect objects such as the following:



Teacher: What is Jill doing?

Student: She's giving { Nancy (some) flowers }
{ (some) flowers to Nancy }

(Either word order would be an appropriate response.) With more advanced students, the teacher should continue:

Teacher: (removes card from view) Do you think Nancy is happy?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: Why?

Student: Because Jill gave her flowers! (The word order with *to* would be less appropriate.)

3. **Form.** To help students develop a sense of using the *to* preposition in those contexts where the indirect objects is emphasized in a response, try a drill like this:

a. **Student 1:** Would you lend me your car?

Student 2: I can't. I've already promised to lend it to Harvey.

b. **Student 1:** Would you lend me your textbook?

Student 2: I can't. I've already promised to lend it to Judy.

4. **Form.** Using verbs like *buy* and *make*, you can elicit the addition of a benefactive *for* phrase in the following manner:

a. **Teacher:** Ian bought some candy.

Student: Who did he buy it for?

Teacher: Himself.

Student: Oh, he bought it for himself!

b. **Student 2:** Clara made a dress.

Student 3: Who did she make it for?

Student 2: Me.

Student 3: Oh, she made it for you!

5. **Form.** To practice the use of direct objects as passive subjects, students can give things—that the teacher provides—to each other with an appropriate follow-up question (*Who was the _____ given to?*):

a. **Teacher:** Paolo, give the candy to Maria. b. **Teacher:** Said, give the ruler to Roberto.

Student 1: Who was the candy given to?

Student 3: Who was the ruler given to?

Student 2: It was given to Maria.

Student 4: It was given to Roberto.

6. **Form.** To practice the use of indirect objects as passive subjects, use consumer gripes as a context. One student can role-play the consumer affairs officer and the others can state their complaints.

a. **Student 1:** What's your $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{complaint} \\ \text{problem} \\ \text{gripe} \end{array} \right\} ?$

Student 2: I was sold a bad car by AZ Used Cars.

b. **Student 1:** What's your _____?

Student 3: I was sold a defective TV set by Jones Appliances.

c. **Student 1:** What's your _____?

Student 4: I was sold a fake diamond by Bijou Jewelers.

7. **Meaning/Use.** To help learners practice deciding whether verbs take *to*, *for*, or *of* with indirect objects, have students paraphrase sentences like the following so that the indirect object becomes the most important (i.e., new or dominant) information. They should imagine dialogues where A first says the indirect objects very softly or mumbles them.

A: I gave Ying the book.

A: I baked Harry a pie.

B: Who?

B: Who?

A: I gave the book to Ying.

A: I baked a pie for Harry.

Other sentences that could be used for this exercise are:

I asked Bill a question.

I sold Jane my car.

I read Susie a story.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. *Provide original example sentences to illustrate the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples.*
 - a. direct object
 - b. eliciting indirect object
 - c. benefactive indirect object
 - d. dative indirect object
 - e. passive with indirect object as subject
 - f. dominance
 - g. indirect object alternation
 - h. verb that requires an indirect object
 - i. verb that requires both direct and indirect objects
 - j. verb of transfer
 - k. double-object construction
 - l. prepositional construction
2. *Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences:*
 - a. I handed Sue the note.
 - b. He was offered a job by the supervisor.
 - c. The information was given to him before the trial.
 - d. We bought Horace a watch.
 - e. Did Martha ask George a question?
3. *Why are the following sentences ungrammatical (or at best awkward)?*
 - a. *John hasn't sent his brother it.
 - b. *Mary bought for me the book.
 - c. *Roger asked a question to Phyllis.
4. *List all the active and passive sentences—with and without indirect object alternation—that would be related to the following information.*
 - a. verb: send (past tense); agent: mother; direct object: the parcel; dative indirect object: Bob
 - b. verb: bring (past tense); agent: Bill; direct object: some flowers; benefactive indirect object: Agnes

Test your ability to apply what you know.

5. *What is the problem with the following ESL student utterances?*
- *Explain me that rule again, please.
 - *Are you going to give to me an answer?
 - *Why didn't you open him the door?
 - *We didn't know, so we asked to Harry.
 - *Please excuse me my poor English.
6. *B. Fraser (personal communication) has suggested that the indirect object alternation rule for verbs taking the preposition to is based on phonological considerations and will apply only if the verb is:*
- monosyllabic; or
 - disyllabic with stress on the initial syllable; for example:
Tell John the answer. ***Explain John the answer.**
Offer us something else. ***Communicate Ann the answer.**
?Whisper Ann the answer.
- Can you think of any exceptions to this rule? What about verbs that take the prepositions for and of ?*
7. *ESL/EFL students sometimes have difficulty in distinguishing pairs such as the following—especially when they are listening. Think of ways that would help students learn what to listen for to clearly distinguish such sentences.*
- Mary was giving a sweater to John**
Mary was given a sweater by John.
8. *One of your students asks you what kind of verb beg is (dative? benefactive? eliciting?) and whether or not it can take an indirect object. How will you respond?*

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For additional analyses of the meanings of the ditransitive construction, consult:

- Colleman, T., & De Clerck, B. (2008). Accounting for ditransitive constructions with *envy* and *forgive*. *Functions of Language*, 15(2), 187–215.
- Croft, W. (2003). Lexical rules versus constructions: A false dichotomy. In H. Cuyckens, Th. Berg, R. Dirven, & K.-U. Panther (Eds.), *Motivation in language: Studies in honour of Gunter Radden* (pp. 49–68). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

For discussions of how indirect objects are used not only in English, but in other languages, see:

- Colleman, T., & De Clerck, B. (2009). “Caused motion?” The semantics of the English *to*-dative and the Dutch *aan*-dative. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 20(1), 5–42.
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For an historical overview of research on the indirect object, see:

- Mukherjee, J. (2005). *English ditransitive verbs: Aspects of theory, description, and a usage-based model*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi.

For a further explication of the effect of information structure on syntax, see:

- Erteschik-Shir, N. (2007). *Information structure: The syntax-discourse interface*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
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For a probabilistic treatment of dative constructions, see:

Bresnan, J., & Ford, M. (2010). Prediction syntax: Processing dative constructions in American and Australian varieties of English. *Language*, 86(1), 168–213.

For some examples of exercises for teaching indirect objects, see:

Badalamenti, V., & Henner-Stanchina, C. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 1* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Cake, C. D. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 5*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Elbaum, S. N. (2011). *Grammar in context 2* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Endnotes

1. Herriman (1995) mentions other examples that do not conform to the traditional definition. For instance, the verbs *flash* and *cast* may be followed by an indirect object that tells us *at whom* the action in the verb is being carried out (e.g., *flash someone a smile*, *cast someone the evil eye*).
2. Siewierska and Hollmann (2007) stress the importance of distinguishing between British English and American English in discussions of indirect objects. They cite British examples such as *She gave to him a book*, *She gave a book the man*, and *It was given him*. They may be uncommon in British English, but they are absent in American English.
3. Here, we interpret *give* as the specific transfer of something from one person to another—not as the general *give*, which means “to donate.” In this latter sense, an explicit indirect object, while possible, is not required. These two meanings of *give* would have separate lexical entries.
4. Huddleston and Pullum (2002), who view indirect objects from a strictly structural perspective, different from what we do here, use the term *prepositional complement* instead of *prepositional indirect object*.
5. In some dialects of English—especially British—*The book was given Mary (by Chen)* is another acceptable version of this sentence. According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), this construction is considered more acceptable if the direct object is a pronoun: *The book was given me by my aunt*. In American English, retention of the preposition *to* is preferred.
6. Students have asked us why objects of *from* and *with* in sentences like the following are not also considered indirect objects:
 - a. **I took the book from her.**
 - b. **I left the book with her.**In sentence (a), *from her* expresses the source, not the recipient of the book. We would not be able to say “I took her the book” and have the same meaning as in (a). In (b) the *with her* expresses the location of the book rather than receivership or possession of it. If we say “I left her the book,” what we really mean is “I left the book for her,” where she is indeed the intended recipient. From examination of sentences such as these, it can be concluded that only verbs taking the prepositions *to*, *for*, and *of* can have indirect objects in English. The students’ first language may often be the source of these questions and of the related errors they make in English. For example, in German it is possible to have a postverbal—in this case postauxiliary—indirect object expressing the equivalent of “steal from”: *Er hat mir das Auto gestohlen* = *He stole the car from me*. Literally, this is *He has me the car stolen*, which can be more freely translated as *He stole me the car*. In English, this sentence would mean, “He stole the car for me,” not “He stole the car from me.”
7. As well as having metaphorical uses, constructions with indirect objects also appear in many common idioms: *read x the riot act*, *lend x an ear*, *promise x the moon*, *give x the cold shoulder*, and *show x the ropes*.
8. Of course, “dominance” can also be achieved by phonological means (i.e., stress) just as it can through syntax. For example, contrary to Erteschik-Shir’s syntactic principle, one could say:

Pass the salt to me. (i.e., not the pepper!)
Pass me the salt. (i.e., not Roger!)
9. Sentences of this form are apparently much more acceptable in British than American English.

Introduction

As you saw in Chapter 2, *adjectives* are words that describe a quality of a noun. All languages have adjectives (Baker, 2003; Dixon, 2004), although it is not always so easy to distinguish them from other parts of speech. Recall in Chapter 18 (the passive voice) that certain past participles used with the passive voice are also used as adjectives with identical forms:

The beans were *refried*. { by someone (passive)
present state of the beans (adjective)

Indeed, Paul (2010) only recently argued that adjectives should be treated as a separate part of speech for Mandarin Chinese and should not be conflated with intransitive verbs.

While adjectives typically precede and modify nouns in English,

A large package arrived yesterday. (*large* is the adjective.)

as we saw in Chapter 2, it is also possible for a noun to precede another noun and to modify it. Our example there was

The glass jar is dirty. (Note that the adjective form would be *glassy*.)

And, as we will see, although many adjectives in English can apply to different degrees, e.g.,

The porridge was hot.

The porridge was too hot.

not all adjectives can be graded:

The shop is open.

***The shop is too open.¹**

Furthermore, as Doetjes (2008) points out, the *too* + adjective in English is different from other languages, such as French, in that a semantically similar form to the *too* of English is used not only directly before adjectives (as with English), but also directly before verbs, and before nouns as well (p. 123):

trop grand

trop danser

trop de livres

However, in other ways, adjectives in English are simpler than those of many languages. English adjectives remain invariant in form, no matter which position they occupy in a sentence:

The moon is full tonight.

The full moon shone brightly.

This is not true of other languages. In German, for instance, adjectives that come before the noun must agree with the noun in case, gender, and number, but those that occur in the predicate are invariant:

English: **A blue car**

German: **Ein blaues** (+ nominative case + neuter + singular) **Auto**

English: **The car is blue.**

German: **Das Auto ist blau.**

English adjectives no longer inflect for gender, person, or number, although they once did. Thus, the forms of adjectives in English are less complicated than they are in some other languages.

While this seems easy enough, ESL/EFL learners do have to learn certain things about English adjectives—that they precede nouns, for instance, which is not true of Romance languages, among others. In fact, as we will see, some English adjectives can occur only before a noun; others appear only after a copular verb or as a predicate adjective. Many adjectives can occupy more than one position, but depending on where they are placed, they may convey different meanings. Finally, when more than one adjective is used, as in

A spectacular full moon seemed to rise from the sea.

they often must be sequenced in a particular way—a sequence that may cause learning challenges for ESL/EFL students.

In short, what seems at first to be a straightforward part of speech becomes more complicated as we dig deeper, something that should not surprise you at this point in your reading of this book.

The Form Of Adjectives

MORPHOLOGY

As we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, adjectives do not have any typical form; however, derivational affixes commonly associated with adjectives include *-al* (*mental, special*), *-able/-ible* (*commendable, possible*), *-ar* (*particular, popular*), *-ful/-less* (*hopeful, hopeless*), *-ic* (*scientific, basic*), *-ish* (*foolish*), *-ive* (*attractive, expensive*), *-ous* (*dangerous, delicious*), and *-y* (*pretty, dirty*) (Leech, 1989).

More recently, Moon (2011) studied adjectives formed with the derivational suffix *-like* (e.g., *childlike*). Although it has been suggested that such formations lie on the boundary between affixation and compounding (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999, p. 533), there is no denying that attaching *-like* to a noun is a productive process for forming new adjectives. In her corpus study, using the 450-million word Bank of English corpus (BoE), Moon found not only that there was a large number of adjectives with *-like*, but also that such adjectives often collocated with particular nouns (e.g., *jewel-like* with *color* and *wise-like* with *grip*). She added that from decades of corpus research, we have come to expect such phraseological patterns.

Adjectives also have two inflectional morphemes: the *-er* of the comparative (*larger*) and the *-est* (*largest*) of the superlative; although these days, it seems that more and more speakers of English are opting for the periphrastic forms (*more* + adjective for the comparative and *most* + adjective for the superlative), regardless of the length of the adjective. We will say no more at this point about these constructions because we devote two full chapters to issues of comparison and degree (Chapters 34 and 35), although it is perhaps worth mentioning that other languages do not restrict their comparative and superlative morphology to adjectives (see Dixon, 2004, for references).

SYNTAX

As we saw in our phrase structure rules, there are two basic positions for adjectives in a sentence:

1. Attributive position (before a noun)

NP → (det³) (APⁿ) N (-pl) (PrepP)

the funny clowns
a perfect match

In fact, as is evident in our rule, it might be more properly said that nouns can be preceded by adjective *phrases*. The reason for this refinement is that adjectives themselves can be modified, so that in the following example, *perfectly* modifies *wonderful*, and together they modify *opportunity*:

A perfectly wonderful opportunity

2. Predicative position (after *be* copula and other copular or linking verbs—*seem, appear, feel, look, etc.*)

VP → cop AP

The clowns are very funny.
The weather turned cold.

Sometimes the copular verb is deleted, here in its infinitive form, so that the adjective follows a noun directly—what we called in Chapter 6 an “object noun predicate”:

They considered Stuart [to be] mad.

A predicative adjective in postnominal position can also result from a reduced relative clause (discussed later in this chapter):

The news [that is] available at this time is not good.

In the following sections, we go into further detail with regard to the two basic positions (attributive and predicative) of adjectives in English clauses.

Attributive Adjectives

Not all adjectives are syntactically flexible. Prenominal, or attributive, position is the most characteristic position for English adjectives, but some adjectives primarily occur attributively, and others only occur predicatively.

The following categories of adjectives occur primarily in attributive position (based on Bolinger, 1967).

1. Those adjectives that show the reference of the head noun has already been determined:

| | | | |
|-----|---|------------|---------------------|
| the | { | very | } man I was seeking |
| | | particular | |
| | | same | |
| | | self-same | |
| | | exact | |

2. Those adjectives that show us the importance or rank of the head noun:

| | | | |
|-------|---|-----------|----------|
| their | { | major | } faults |
| | | main | |
| | | chief | |
| | | primary | |
| | | principal | |

In an extensive study of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), Liu (2010) affirmed the attributive position for the five adjectives mentioned, which we have listed in descending order of frequency; however, he did find a fairly low number of instances where *major* and *primary* could occur predicatively:

You know, marriage and motherhood are pretty major.

Positions involving oversight of EE [environmental education] have been eliminated or the coordinator's responsibilities changed so that EE is no longer primary.

Liu (2010) also made a number of other interesting observations regarding these five adjectives, such as with which words they collocate (e.g., *primary care*; *principal investigator*) and their frequency (*major* is almost ten times more frequent than *principal*).

3. Those adjectives that show the head noun is recognized by law or custom:

| | | |
|-----|----------|------|
| the | } | heir |
| | lawful | |
| | rightful | |
| | legal | |
| | true | |

4. Those adjectives that qualify the time reference of the noun:

the future king

the former chairperson

the present monarch

the previous occupant

5. Those adjectives that qualify the geographical reference of the noun:

a Southern gentleman

a rural mail carrier

the urban crisis

Two other subcategories that are mentioned but not specifically defined by Bolinger (1967) are as follows:

6. Those adjectives that intensify or emphasize the head noun:

a total stranger

a mere child

sheer fraud

utter nonsense

7. Those adjectives that show the uniqueness of the head noun:

the sole survivor

the only nominee

a single individual

Of course, as we have said, nouns can be modified by other nouns, becoming noun compounds. These modifying nouns, too, are attributive and may not occur after the copula *be*:

a medical doctor

***a doctor is medical**

an atomic physicist

***a physicist is atomic**

a reserve officer

***an officer is reserve**

Saying that the adjectives are prenominal simply means that they occur before a noun.

Thus, wherever nouns can occur, so can adjectives. They can modify both subjects and objects.

subject: **Thoughtful guests**

indirect object:

give their deserving hosts

direct object:

personal gifts

object of the preposition:

of special value.

Predicative Adjectives (Following a Verb)

Once again, most adjectives can appear in several different positions in a sentence.² Just as with exclusively attributive adjectives, however, certain adjectives can only be predicative. There are three such categories.

1. Adjectives that begin with an *a*-prefix:³

The boy is awake. *the awake boy

The boat is adrift. *the adrift boat

Note that Huddleston and Pullum (2002) observe that if one of these adjectives is premodified, it can appear attributively (p. 559):

their wide-awake patient

2. Health adjectives (Chalker, 1984):

Larry feels faint.

He is not well.

3. Adjectives that must be followed by prepositional phrases or infinitives (i.e., ones that are more complex, syntactically):

He's bound for China.

Debbie seems inclined to agree.

Occasionally, complex adjectival phrases can appear prenominally:

My good-for-nothing cousin

but they are the exception rather than the norm, and they are usually hyphenated. English is different in this respect from many other languages. For example, Cinque (2010) shows that often prenominal adjectives in Greek and Bulgarian can be complex:

o kírios kata protereótita logos (Greek)

the main by priority reason

'the main reason in terms of priority'

glavnata po znacenie pricina (Bulgarian)

main the in significance reason

'the main reason in terms of significance'

Predicative Adjectives (Postnominal)

As we have already seen, predicative adjectives can also occur directly after a noun when the copular verb has been deleted. There are two kinds. The first kind of postnominal adjective consists of adjectives modifying object nouns:

They considered Stuart mad.

This pattern occurs only with certain verbs. One group are verbs showing mental assessments or personal preferences, such as *consider, like, think, prefer, declare, report, believe, imagine, hold, want, call*, and so on:

Sandy thought it odd.

They declared him sane.

They held him accountable.

Another group of verbs that permit the adjective to follow the object directly are certain causative verbs, such as *make, turn, get, keep*:

Hay fever makes me crazy.

The frost turned the leaves brown.

His diet kept him healthy.

See Chapter 31 for more on the special characteristics of causative verbs.

The second kind of postnominal adjective can be said to be derived from relative clauses (see Chapter 29). Suffice it to say here that they follow the noun directly, having lost the relative pronoun and the *be* verb of the relative clause:⁴

The news available at this time is not good.

↑
[that is]

Here are two more examples:

People strong in character should run for political office.

↑
[who are]

Join the committee concerned with local development issues.

↑
[that is]

It should be apparent why relative clauses are sometimes called *adjective clauses*. Adjectives and relative clauses serve similar functions in providing qualifying information about nouns.

As with the other positions, a few categories of adjectives always occur postnominally (Chalker, 1984):

1. Adjectives in phrases of measurement:

He is six feet tall.

The ruler is twelve inches long.

Note that entire adjectival measure phrases can appear before a noun, but when they do, the noun is in its singular form, regardless of the cardinal number expressed:

They have a one-year-old child.

He is a six-foot-tall man.

It is a twelve-inch-long ruler.

Actually, this is true of more than measure phrases. Nouns serving to modify other nouns are unmarked for number in prenominal position.⁵ This is a minor point, but a source of errors for ESL/EFL students:

I need an egg carton.

This shoebox will do.

***I need an eggs carton.**

***This shoesbox will do.**

2. Adjectives in certain fixed expressions (mostly borrowed from French):

attorney general heir apparent president-elect notary public

3. Adjectives following indefinite pronouns, where the adjective derives from a reduced relative clause:

Let's do something [that is] more interesting.

I can't think of anything [that is] exciting to do.

Participles

You may have noticed that the adjectives in our last two examples end in *-ing*. We have encountered this form previously only as the progressive aspect, where we knew it as a present participle. It is a present participle here as well, although here, it serves an adjectival, as opposed to a verbal, function. As such, it can be found in the positions that other adjectives can fill:

Attributive: **He has led an interesting life.**

Predicative: **His life has been interesting.**

Predicative: **Marshall has made life interesting.**

(postnominal)

Before we distinguish present participles functioning as adjectives from present participles functioning as verbs, remember that the past participle can also function both adjectivally and verbally (*refried*). Past participles functioning as adjectives can occupy the same positions as many other adjectives:

Attributive: **The well-worn book was a favorite of all the children.**

Predicative: **The book was well worn.**

Predicative: **The book, well worn from much use, was a favorite.**
(postnominal)

In addition, both present and past participles can be modified by nouns or adverbs to create compound participial adjectives:

noun + present participle: **a man-eating tiger**

noun + past participle: **a flea-bitten dog**

adverb + present participle: **a fast-rising star**

adverb + past participle: **a much-loved teacher**

Some adjectives look as if they were verbal past participles, but they actually aren't:

the one-legged man

the crooked lane

the naked truth

the wicked witch

the green-eyed monster

the bearded iris

As we saw in Chapter 18, the pronunciation of certain of these adjectives (*legged*, *crooked*, *naked*, *wicked*) is distinctive. Where phonological rules wouldn't predict it, the *-ed* is pronounced syllabically as /ɪd/. Sometimes the only thing that determines whether an attributive adjective is a verbal participle or an adjectival is its pronunciation:

a learned behavior

a learned scholar

(/lɜrnd/ is a verbal participle)

(/lɜrnɪd/ is an adjectival participle)

Distinguishing Adjectival Participles from Verbal Participles

Consider the following sentences:

-ing adjective: **The magician is *amazing*.**

-ing verb: **The magician is *amazing* us with his magic tricks.**

-en adjective: **The security guard was *relieved*.** (i.e., he stopped worrying)

-en verb: **The security guard was *relieved* by the night watchman.** (i.e., replaced)

One way to differentiate adjectival participles from verbal participles is to add the adverb *very* before the italicized forms in these sentences:

The magician is very *amazing*.

***The magician is very *amazing* us with his magic tricks.**

The security guard was very *relieved*.

***The security guard was very *relieved* by the night watchman.**

This test is more successful in distinguishing identical *-ing* forms than it is identical *-en* forms, however, as there appears to be increasing acceptance of the use of the adverb *very* with a *by* phrase that would normally mark a passive use of the past participle.

Her behavior shocked all of us.

We were all (very) shocked by her behavior.

An additional test to determine whether the *-en* form is adjectival or verbal is to look at the preposition following it. *-En* forms functioning as adjectives take a variety of prepositions (e.g., *amazed at*, *interested in*, etc.), whereas *-en* forms functioning as passive verbs normally take only the *by* phrase; although, as you saw previously, having a *by* phrase is no guarantee that the past participle is a verb:

adjective: **We were amazed at his success.**

adjective/verb?: **We were (very) amazed by the performance.** (no explicit agent in the *by* phrase)

verb: **He was greeted by his many fans after the show.** (explicit agent in the *by* phrase)

The identity of form can sometimes create ambiguous sentences:

Martha Stewart is entertaining.

adjective: **She is an entertaining person.**

verb: **She is entertaining guests.**

We were relieved.

adjective: **We felt a sense of relief.**

verb: **We were relieved by other workers.** (i.e., they came to take our places)

Of course, when these sentences occur in context, it's highly unlikely that they will be perceived as ambiguous.

OTHER STRUCTURAL FACTS

As you can see in our phrase structure rule,

AP → (ADVⁿ) ADJ (PrepP)

an adjective can be preceded by one or more adverbs:

Lenox china is very expensive.

Wedgwood china is really very expensive.

And an adjective can be followed by a prepositional phrase:

I was really surprised at her appearance.

She got me interested in quilting.

For certain adjectives, the prepositional phrase is obligatory:

***He was averse.**

He was averse to my suggestion.

Some adjectives always co-occur with the same preposition (e.g., *conscious of*); others take a variety of prepositions, often with a shift of meaning, such as *good with*, *good to*, *good for*, or *good at*.

We also know from our phrase structure rules that some noun phrases also can take prepositional phrases:

a man of honor

These seem very similar semantically to attributive adjectives:

an honorable man

The similarity is due to the fact that the function of prepositional phrases following nouns is adjectival, unlike the function of prepositional phrases in the verb phrase, which is adverbial.

The Meaning of Adjectives

ATTRIBUTIVE VERSUS PREDICATIVE POSITION

As we said earlier, many adjectives can appear in both attributive and predicative position; however, with a few adjectives, there is a change in meaning:

That responsible person (trustworthy)

That person is responsible. (It could mean trustworthy, but it could also mean to blame.)

Bölinger (1967) noted that there is often something semantically more permanent or characteristic about the attributive adjectives that directly precede nouns than the postnominal adjectives that directly follow nouns, which tend to reflect temporary states or specific events.

For example:

The stolen jewels (a characteristic of the jewels)

The jewels stolen (identified by a specific act—maybe they were recovered later)

The only navigable river (usual fact about a given region)

The only river navigable (temporary state due to a drought or some other event)

The guilty people (a characteristic, classifying modifier of the people)

The people guilty (the people are described in terms of one act or event)

Predicative adjectives are potentially ambiguous, since if we say:

These jewels are stolen.

The river is navigable.

These people are guilty.

we cannot tell whether the adjective is being used to describe something that is permanent and characteristic of the subject noun or something that is temporary or occasional. Changing the adjective to either attributive position or immediate postnominal position can disambiguate in such cases. As Bolinger (1967) puts it, attributive position tends to reject the temporary and the occasional. For example in the following pair, we understand that pink is the characteristic color of the house, not a temporary condition that is created by the light from the sunset:

The pink house ≠ The house was pink in the sunset.

This is borne out further by Chalker's observation that health adjectives are usually used predicatively (if they are meant to convey a temporary condition):

He is sick.

If we change the adjective to attributive position, the quality is construed as much more enduring:

He is a sick man.

Consistent with this observation about the semantics of adjectives in attributive position, compound attributive adjectives formed with present participles tend to reflect habitual or customary action, as opposed to isolated events:⁶

Your friend writes plays. → **Your playwriting friend**

The man broke a leg. → ***The leg-breaking man**

Carnivores are animals that eat meat. → **Carnivores are meat-eating animals.**

My brother bought a house. → ***My house-buying brother**

Other languages use the adjective position to mark meaningful differences, of course. In Spanish, for instance, prenominal or postnominal adjectives can differ in meaning:

El viejo amigo (describes a friend you have had for a long time)

El amigo viejo (describes a friend who is elderly)

Compare this with the three-way ambiguity of the English phrase *an old friend*, which obliges English speakers to paraphrase it with a relative clause to make its meaning clear.

| | | |
|----------------------|---|---|
| an old friend | { | a friend who is old |
| | | a friend whom I have had for a long time |
| | | a former friend (i.e., a person who was a friend long ago and |
| | | possibly is no longer a friend) |

PARTICIPLES (PRESENT VERSUS PAST)

A problem for many learners of English is the adjectival use of *-ing* and *-en* participles derived from “emotive” verbs. The term *emotive* is used to refer to verbs such as the following:

| | | | | | |
|-----------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|-----------|----------|
| aggravate | bore | convince | frighten | mystify | surprise |
| alarm | calm | defeat | insult | overwhelm | terrify |
| amaze | captivate | disappoint | interest | please | tire |
| amuse | charm | disturb | intrigue | puzzle | worry |
| annoy | comfort | embarrass | involve ⁷ | satisfy | |
| astonish | concern ⁷ | encourage | love | shock | |
| bewilder | confuse | excite | mislead | stagger | |

A tendency that many English learners have is to overgeneralize the *-ing* participle and produce sentences such as the following:

*I am interesting in sports. (i.e., *interesting* for *interested*)

Students have to learn that when they want to use an adjective to refer to the experiencer—the one experiencing the emotion—then the *-en* participle should be used. If they want to use an adjective to refer to the cause of the experience, the *-ing* participle should be used. In the chart below, there is a semantically related sentence in the left-hand column that contains the emotive verb without a participial form, followed by columns with *-en* and *-ing* adjectives.⁸

| PARTICIPLES WITH EMOTIVE VERBS: EXPERIENCER VERSUS CAUSE | | |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Sentence with emotive verb</i> | <i>-en participle refers to the experiencer (the object of the active sentence with the emotive verb)</i> | <i>-ing participle refers to the cause (the subject of the active sentence with the emotive verb)</i> |
| Sports interest Francis. | Francis is interested in sports. | Sports are interesting to Francis. |
| Ethnic jokes don't amuse me. | I am not amused by ethnic jokes. | Ethnic jokes aren't amusing (to me). |
| Ted's loud stereo annoys his neighbors | Ted's neighbors are annoyed by his loud stereo. | Ted's loud stereo is annoying (to his neighbors). |

In an interesting corpus study contrasting the use of *surprised that* and *surprising that* in the British National Corpus, Mindt (2008) suggests that whereas both participles express a degree of unexpectedness, the past participle differs from the present in that *surprised + that*-clause expresses an emotion, whereas *surprising + that*-clause conveys a judgment:

I'm surprised that you have never remarried. (H97 3497)

It's surprising [that] the wife put up with it. (HRS 206)

She further claims that although the adjectives are quasi-synonymous, they occur in different linguistic contexts and have distinct co-occurrence patterns.

STATIVE/DYNAMIC

Givón (1993) places the major parts of speech on a continuum, saying that verbs tend to encode the least static lexical meanings and nouns the most static, with adjectives (and related adverbs) somewhere in between.⁹



Most English adjectives are like nouns in that they describe fairly permanent inherent qualities. This is especially so, as you saw, when they are in the attributive position. This observation also helps explain why it is odd to use the progressive aspect or imperatives with adjectives:

The Earth is round.

***The Earth is being round.**

***Be short.**

Some adjectives, however, can be used predicatively to refer to a temporary state, a change in progress, or something immediate:

She is just being stubborn.

He is looking stronger. (with the comparative form of the adjective)

Be careful.

It is also possible to give a more dynamic sense to certain adjectives by using the copular verb *get* + adjective to indicate a change of state, as opposed to *be* + adjective, which indicates a condition or a state:

He was dry. → [It rained.] **He got wet.** → **He is wet.**

RESTRICTIVE/NONRESTRICTIVE

Semantically, adjectives can be either restrictive or nonrestrictive. The former are necessary for defining which noun is being referred to:

I live in a *brick* house.

The house *decorated* by the Johnsons is quite unusual.

Nonrestrictive adjectives merely add additional information without being essential for identification:

I live in the corner house, which is *brick*.

The house, *decorated* for the holidays, is quite unusual.

Some nonrestrictive adjectives can occur prenominal, too:

our distinguished speaker

our clever receptionist

where there is only one speaker or receptionist.

We go into this semantic distinction in greater detail in Chapters 28 and 29, where we discuss restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses, respectively.

POLARITY

In Chapter 10, we spoke of adjectives of negative and positive polarity. The term *polarity* merely refers to positive and negative contrasts in a language. Thus, adjectives can be paired by contrasting poles:

Positive polarity
(unmarked)

big small;

old

old

long

good

hard

Negative polarity
(marked)

little

young

new

short

bad

soft

Positive polarity
(unmarked)

fast

tall

wide

high

loud

rough

Negative polarity
(marked)

slow

short

narrow

low

quiet

smooth

The adjectives with positive polarity are unmarked because they are used more frequently in any language, learned earlier by children, and used in neutral contexts, such as

How old are you?

The adjectives of negative polarity, on the other hand, are marked, meaning that they are less frequently used, being reserved for unusual contexts:

You say that your daughter is too young to pay full fare. Just how young is she?

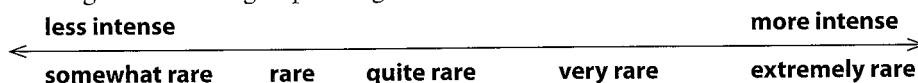
Notice that the asymmetry is also displayed in answers to questions with adjectives of different polarity:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| How old are you? (unmarked) | { Very old. Very young. |
| How young are you? (marked) | { *Very old. Very young. |

The choice for positive or negative wording matters in all sorts of language use situations. For example, when ground beef is described as 75 percent lean, consumers report that it tastes better than when being described as 25 percent fat (as reported in Kamoen, Holleman, Nouwen, Sanders, & van den Bergh, 2011). We say more about the polarity of adjectives in the discussion of comparisons in Chapter 34.

GRADABILITY

Earlier in this chapter, we suggested that the adverb test (i.e., placing *very* before the word in question) could be used to see if a participle was acting as a verb or adjective. In fact, many gradable adjectives (and adverbs, too) can be placed on a continuum of intensity, with the intensity increasing or decreasing depending on the adverb chosen. Here is an example with *rare*:



In their analysis of intensifiers found in the Corpus of Spoken Professional American English (CSPA), Yaguchi, Iyeiri, and Baba (2010) report on the wide variety of forms available to grade adjectives in Present-Day English. They assert that the choice often reflects the speaker's or writer's attitude, as in their examples (note the nonstandard use of *real* and *awful*, instead of *really* and *awfully* in the second and fourth examples, which Yaguchi et al., say are more common in informal situations, but do occur in public, professional speech):

I want to make that *absolutely* clear. (CSPA, White House)

If we can find them, I'll be *real* happy. (CSPA, Committee of Reading)

...we have a *really* strong tradition here of student self governance... (CSPA, Faculty Meeting)

No. I thought it was *awful* simple, with four children. (CSPA, Committee of Mathematics)

While this works well for many adjectives, not all adjectives can be so modified. Some adjectives, in fact, are not gradable, such as the following:

1. Reference adjectives:

***The very former senator from the state of Washington**

2. Adjectives with an absolute meaning:

***A very alternative way of looking at the matter**

Cognitive linguist Paradis (2001) likens the distinction between gradable/ungradable adjectives to that between count-noncount nouns (*car* versus *milk*) and events and states (*arrive* versus *know*) with verbs. These categories have to do with the human perception of boundedness.

According to Paradis, boundedness in adjectives is a fundamental characteristic associated with gradability. Noncount nouns, stative verbs, and gradable adjectives are unbounded. Two basic types of gradable adjectives are distinguished: those that are associated with a boundary (e.g., *true*, *brilliant*) and those that are not (e.g., *nice*, *messy*). Scalar adverbs, such as *very* and *fairly*, harmonize easily with the latter, unbounded group:

very nice
fairly messy

Totality adverbs, such as *absolutely* and *totally*, more naturally modify bounded adjectives:

absolutely true
totally brilliant

However, the property of boundedness in adjectives is not fixed; it can be changed through context, so that we can use scalar adverbs with bounded adjectives:

He is extremely Swedish.
She is very pregnant.

The Use of Adjectives

ORDER OF ATTRIBUTIVE ADJECTIVES

As we know from our phrase structure rules, it is possible to have more than one adjective phrase modifying a noun. In this attested example from Feist (2009), multiple adjectives precede the noun *instrument* (in this case, a tambourine):

your actual tinny round percussion instrument

It is clear that the order is not random:

***your percussion actual round tinny instrument**

Furthermore, the order of attributive adjectives before a noun is different in English than it is in other languages. For instance, some languages, like French, have a mixed order: some attributive adjectives referring to age, size, and evaluation precede the noun, while other attributive adjectives referring to color or origin follow. For example:

une grande voiture jaune
(big) (car) (yellow)
'a big yellow car'

une vieille femme Italienne
(old) (woman) (Italian)
'an old Italian woman'

In certain cases, two adjectives may precede a noun in French and one may follow:

une jolie petite voiture jaune
(pretty) (little) (car) (yellow)
'a pretty little yellow car'

In Arabic, according to Svatko (1979), *all* attributive adjectives come after the noun, and up to three adjectives are possible in this position; however, Svatko adds that the Arabic ordering system is less rigid than the English one; as a result of all these differences, Arabic speakers beginning their study of English make adjective ordering errors in prenominal sequences. For example,

***an American interesting movie** ***a wooden big bowl**

Feist's (2009) example with the noun *instrument* is unusual in its length. Wulff's (2003) multifactorial analysis, using data from the British National Corpus (BNC), revealed that noun phrases containing more than two prenominal adjectives are relatively rare. In a 10-million-word subcorpus of the BNC that she examined, Wulff found 9,647 adjective pairs, but only 426 of them were followed by a third adjective. Still, as we saw with the examples of Arabic

speakers' adjective orders, there is something to be learned about prenominal adjective order, even when only two adjectives precede a noun.

Feist (2009) suggests it is helpful to think of there being zones before a noun in English. He starts with Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik's (1985) depiction of four zones, which Feist claims is also supported by Halliday's research:

| <i>Determiners</i> | <i>Premodifiers</i> | | | | <i>Head</i> |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| | <i>Zone I: precentral</i> | <i>Zone II: central</i> | <i>Zone III: postcentral</i> | <i>Zone IV: prehead</i> | |
| our | numerous | splendid | | tourist | attractions |
| all this | | | costly | social | security |
| a | certain | | | church | tower |
| these | | | crumbling grey | church | towers |
| some | | intricate | old, interlocking | Chinese | designs |

To these, he assigns semantic labels as follows (all of Feist's examples are attested):

| <i>Determiners</i> | <i>Premodifiers</i> | | | | <i>Head</i> |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| | <i>Reinforcer</i> | <i>Epithet</i> | <i>Descriptor</i> | <i>Classifier</i> | |
| your | actual | tinny | round | percussion | instrument |
| a | mere | useless | gibbering | stop-the-war-at-any-price | pacifist |
| | sheer | desperate | | | necessity |
| a | complete | bloody | | | fool |
| | | little | black | iron | fences |
| a | | shabby | dark | city | suit |
| a | | lissome | young | TVNZ | reporter |
| some | | gangbuster | new | McKinsey | idea |
| the | | beautiful | sunny | winter | weather |
| the | | huge | annual | ram | sales |
| | | ugly | trailing | overhead | wires |
| | | smooth | panning | camera | movements |
| her | | lacy | tin-roofed | row | house |
| a | | distinctive | checked | baseball | cap |
| the | | filthy | colonial | military | compounds |
| | | traditional | creamy | vanilla | ice-cream |

Returning to his example of the tambourine, Feist (2009) elaborates on each of the zones:

your actual tinny round percussion instrument

Your, of course, is a determiner. Feist classifies *actual* as a reinforcer. The epithet zone has a scalar meaning; *tinny* fits here. *Round* belongs in the descriptor zone, and *percussion* has a referential meaning and occupies the classifier zone.

Another point that we should mention about adjective order is that attributive adjectives are sometimes conjoined with *and* when there are two adjectives from the same category that both partially modify the same noun (i.e., using either of the two adjectives alone would be semantically misleading):

an orange and white marble
a wooden and metal implement

Also, two or more attributive adjectives are sometimes separated by commas in writing if there is repetition (intensification) or if the two adjectives are from the same zone and are not incompatible. For example:

a big, big ice cream cone
a charming, attractive host

CASES WITH VARIABLE ORDER

Bailey (1975) reports that certain adjectives appear to have a variable order with regard to certain descriptor adjectives:

1. Proper adjectives¹⁰ and the way they order with material adjectives such as *wooden*, *brick*, and *glassy*; for example:

these { **wooden Japanese** } chests a large { **porcelain Chinese** } vase
 { **Japanese wooden** }

2. Proper adjectives and adjectives of color, such as

a { **German white** } wine
 { **white German** }

3. Adjectives denoting shape—such words as *round*, *oblong*, *wide*, and *flat*—may, in combinations with other adjectives, be rearranged according to the demands of the context:

a { **large** } oblong box / an oblong { **large** } box
 { **yellow** } { **yellow** }

a round { **blue** } table / a { **blue** } round table
 { **small** } { **small** }

Further study is needed to determine the semantic constraints and discourse contexts that will explain the variable order for these types of adjectives.

THE PRIMARY STRESS RULE

Another interesting finding from Bailey's study is that her subjects produced strings such as the following in two different contexts with different stress patterns:

Context 1: **Three large triangles—one blue, one red, and one yellow—produced "the large YELLOW triangle."**

Context 2: **Three yellow triangles—two small and one large—produced "the LARGE yellow triangle."**

That is to say, the ordering of measurement and color adjectives is more or less fixed, but English speakers assign primary stress to one adjective or the other depending on context; that is, the adjective that most clearly limits and defines the noun with respect to the other nouns in the same context gets the primary stress.

Conclusion

Although the forms of English adjectives aren't complicated compared with those in other languages, some teachable points can help ESL/EFL students master them more efficiently. Primary among these are matters of meaning and use, particularly the meaning of adjectives associated with particular positions, the meaning differences between present and past participles, and the sequencing of descriptive adjectives of different types when using more than one in the attributive position.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** Tim Butterworth and Darlene Schultz suggest that a teacher who wants to have students practice adjectives should put on a desk a number of different objects and tell them to concentrate on the objects. After a few minutes, the teacher covers the objects with a cloth and ask students to remember as many of the objects as they can and describe them. For example:

a gold(en) cufflink
a little blue stuffed animal

2. **Form.** Firsten and Killian (1994) recommend a role-play in which one person plays the role of a traveler at an airport or train station who has lost his or her luggage, while another student plays the role of an agent in the "Lost-and-Found" office. The agent has to ask very specific questions about the lost luggage and its contents, and the traveler has to be able to answer the questions in great detail.

3. **Form.** To work with the need to hyphenate prenominal measure phrases, tell students to treat the hyphens as if they were parentheses in math, where the inner (i.e., hyphenated) material is interpreted first, before the larger phrase:

four year old children
four [year-old] children
[four-year-old] children

Have them hyphenate other measure phrases depending on the meaning, such as:

five hundred pound wrestlers (Hyphenate this to describe sumo wrestlers.)
two foot long hot dogs (Hyphenate this to show what is so famous about hot dogs from Coney Island.)

4. **Meaning.** In order to give high-intermediate or advanced ESL/EFL students a feeling for attributive versus postnominal position of those adjectives that can occur in both positions, exercises such as the following can be provided. The students should be asked to put the adjective specified in the attributive position if a characteristic or permanent meaning is conveyed, and in the postnominal position if a temporary or specific interpretation is called for.

- a. *available.* We didn't purchase any new equipment last month because there was so little (1) _____ money (2) _____.
- b. *elected.* At the beginning of each board meeting, the chairperson introduces the (1) _____ officers (2) _____.

5. **Meaning.** To help students understand the meaning of present participle versus past participle adjectives, Thewlis (2007) says to give students a short list of some common emotions or feelings, such as boredom, confusion, depression, excitement, and embarrassment. They then form groups and make two lists—(1) situations that may cause them to feel this way, and (2) their reactions when they do. For example, *boredom*:

Boring Situations

long meetings

movies I have seen already

some lectures

Bored Reactions

doodle

fall asleep

think about other things

The groups then compare their responses and discuss similarities and differences (e.g., *Long meetings are boring. I doodle when I am bored.*).

6. **Form/Meaning.** For more advanced students, give them the following passage from Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*.

After all of these years I can still picture that old time to myself now, just as it was then: the town drowsing in the sunshine on a summer's morning; the streets empty, or pretty nearly so; one or two clerks sitting in front of the Water Street stores with their splint-bottomed chairs tilted back against the walls, chins on breasts, hats slouched over their faces, asleep . . . ; two or three wood flats at the end of the wharf, but nobody to listen to the peaceful lapping of the wavelets against them; the great Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along, point above the town and the point below, bounding the river-glimpse and burning it into a sort of sea, and withal a very still and brilliant and lonely one.

Ask students to identify the adjectives and discuss their form and position.

7. **Meaning.** Try a variation of the game "Mad-Libs." To do this, write a passage, leaving blanks where adjectives belong. Without showing the passage to the class, elicit an adjective of color, an adjective of shape, a proper adjective, an adjective with *-ing*, an adjective with *-en*, an adjective that can be preceded by *very*, and so on. Then the students fill in the blanks using the adjectives that have been elicited. Usually, a humorous story results. Following this class exercise, the students prepare their own similar passages (individually or in groups) and have other students supply them with adjectives to fill in the blanks.
8. **Use.** Have students go online and search for a humane society site. Have them note descriptions of animals that are available for adoption or notices of animals that have been lost or found. Here are some actual examples that we have found:

Missing: Large Male Brown Tiger Striped Cat

Lost: Fat furry black mixed Pomeranian

See who can find the longest description. Have students create their own examples.

9. **Use.** Have each student in the class write a sentence that describes another student, using two or more adjectives in sequence. The other students have to guess who is being described; for example:

He is an athletic, eighteen-year-old Mexican student.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide an original sentence illustrating each of the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) or word parts in your example.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. attributive adjective | d. present participle adjective |
| b. predicative adjective | e. past participle adjective |
| c. postnominal adjective | f. gradable adjective |

2. Why are the following sentences ungrammatical or at best awkward?

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. *The asleep children can have lunch later. | d. *Jessica is my thirteen-years-old friend. |
| b. *This problem is main. | e. ?He is completely nice. |
| c. *An overly fond of chocolate person is called a "chocoholic." | |

3. How is the following sentence ambiguous?

Hazel is trying.

4. Explain the difference:

Tom Sawyer painted the fence white.

Tom Sawyer painted the white fence.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

5. If your students produce sentences like the following, what do they still have to learn about using adjectives in order to say what they want to say in Standard English?

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| a. *She received a big nice bunch of roses for Valentine's Day. | b. *Snowball is my white hairs cat. |
| | c. *I am boring in algebra class. |

6. Why is the following amusing?

A: How good are the Boston Red Sox this year?

B: (disgusted fan) You mean how bad are they.

7. A student asks you to explain why she heard a native speaker say,

She avoided things unfamiliar. . .

instead of

She avoided unfamiliar things.

How would you answer?

8. Examine the following. How is quite different from other adverbs preceding adjectives?

Erik was quite generous.

Erik was very generous.

Erik was extremely generous.

Erik was quite a generous man.

Erik was a very generous man.

Erik was an extremely generous man.

9. A student asks you to explain the difference between used to and be used to. What test could you use?

I used to eat spicy Indian food.

I am used to spicy Indian food.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For helpful linguistic analyses of adjectives, see:

Bolinger, D. (1972). *Degree words*. The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton.

Cabredo Hofherr, P., & Matushansky, O. (Eds.). (2010). *Adjectives: Formal analyses in syntax and semantics*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Kennedy, C. (1999). *Projecting the adjective. The syntax and semantics of gradability and comparison*. New York, NY/London, England: Garland.

McNally, L., & Kennedy, C. (Eds.). (2008). *Adjectives and adverbs*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

For a discussion of the differences with adjectives in other languages, consult:

Bouchard, D. (2002). *Adjectives, numbers, and interfaces. Why languages vary*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: North Holland.

For explanations and exercises on the ordering of attributive adjectives, see:

Houck, N., & Hilles, S. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 4*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Thewlis, S. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 3* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For exercises that work on the differences between present participle and past participle adjectives, consult:

Carlisi, K. (2008). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 3*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Wisniewska, I., Riggenbach, H., & Samuda, V. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 2* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Endnotes

1. Of course, most sentences can always be given an interpretation, but this would require some sort of implied or explicit qualification; e.g.,
The shop was too open to the wind.
as opposed to the more conventional interpretation of “open for business.”
2. What we mean is that it is syntactically possible. Presumably, for any given sentence, information status would influence where it is placed. For instance, when the noun is new information, it and the adjective modifying it are likely to be included in the predicate.
3. These *a* adjectives are from Old English. There are even a few adjectives that don't have the same etymology but by analogy are treated in the same way:
The children were afraid of the thunderstorm.
***The afraid children**
For a plausible account of how children learn to deal with these exceptions, see Boyd and Goldberg (2011).
4. We should acknowledge that not all postnominal adjectives can be said to derive from reduced relative clauses:
The Johnsons have bought a house resembling a barn.
***The Johnsons have bought a house that is resembling a barn.**
The man in line in front of me purchased several items totaling \$205.
***The man in line in front of me purchased several items that were totaling \$205.**
See Chapter 29 for further discussion of this point.

5. There are, however, a few exceptions. For example, we do say *the parts department*.
6. We agree with Bolinger (1967) that customary action is one source of compound adjectives, but we would also cite isolated events as another source, provided they have some historical significance or newsworthiness and are not mundane isolated events. For example:
He batted in the run that won the game. → The game-winning run
Her time in the race broke a record. → Her record-breaking time
7. *Concern* and *involve* appear as adjectives only in their past participle form.
8. It may also be useful to point out to students that both the *-ing* and *-en* forms can function as manner adverbs if an *-ly* suffix is added:
Ted's stereo is annoyingly loud most of the time.
Corey stared excitedly at the hand he had just been dealt.
9. Givón's continuum provides a functional explanation for the notion of parts of speech and also helps to explain cross-linguistic differences in parts of speech, such as why the English adjective *tall* has a noun equivalent in many West African languages, why Japanese inflects some adjectives the same as verbs, and why many adjectives in English can also function as nouns (e.g., *Blue is my favorite color*). In other words, adjacent categories may overlap in certain ways.
10. Proper adjectives—"adjectives of origin" (our earlier example was *Swedish*; here, they are *Chinese* and *Japanese*) refer to nationalities, religions, geographical regions, and directions (sometimes even cities—*Venetian*), months, seasons of the year, etc. They are written with a capital letter.

Prepositions

Introduction

Prepositions are notoriously difficult to learn. Long after ESL/EFL students have achieved a high level of proficiency in English, they still struggle with prepositions. Why do such little words as *in*, *on*, and *at*, cause so many problems?

One answer to this question lies in the fact that the work of prepositions is often performed in other languages, such as German and Russian, through inflections. We alluded to this point in Chapter 2 when we pointed out that English, having lost many of its inflectional affixes over the years, has assigned to prepositions the function of showing role relationships. For example, we noted in Chapter 16 that the preposition *of* can mark possession; in Chapter 18, we showed that it was the responsibility of the preposition *by* to mark a particular noun as the agent in a passive sentence; and in Chapter 19, we examined three prepositions—*to*, *for*, and *of*—that can mark indirect objects. ESL/EFL students, therefore, have to learn new forms for familiar functions.

Second, in their spatial meaning, prepositions do not always match up well from one language to another. A Spanish speaker, for instance, could say *en el agua* for both *in the water* and *on the water*. A Czech speaker would use three different prepositions where an English speaker would use just one:

I'm going to America. = **Jedu do Ameriky.**

I'm going to Slovakia. = **Jedu na Slovensko.**

I'm going to Grandma's. = **Jedu k babičce.**

Or consider the following difference between German and English:

English to = German zu English at = German an (or in or bei)

(but) John is at home. = **Johann ist zu Hause.**

In addition, there are language-specific gaps when expressing some universal spatial meanings. For instance, Zelinsky-Wibbelt (1993) notes that compared to English and French, German is underdetermined with respect to expressing spatial relations with prepositions. Not having correspondence from one language to the next becomes even more problematic when the meaning of prepositions is extended beyond expressing spatial relations to establishing relationships of a more abstract nature.

Consider the following:

English to = French à English for = French pour

(but) a glass for cognac = un verre à cognac

Third, prepositions are polysemous (Taylor, 1993; Tyler & Evans, 2003). One preposition can have multiple meanings or senses. For example, it would be difficult to provide the exact same definition for *over* in each of the following sentences:

The mirror is over the sink.

The path goes over the hills.

He put his hand over his heart.

She has power over me.

We traveled over a hundred miles.

They argued over the meaning of the word.

It can be challenging for learners to keep track of different meanings of a preposition and to distinguish these meanings from those of other prepositions. For example, how is one to distinguish the many uses of *over* from the uses of *above*?

Then, too, even proficient English speakers exhibit variable performance with regard to which prepositions they use for a particular meaning. For instance, do you say *going out to lunch* or *going out for lunch*? Do you say *symbol of something* or *symbol for something*? Variation in the language to which English language learners are exposed can cause much confusion on the part of ESL/EFL students, especially when the use of prepositions by native speakers departs from what the prescriptive rules dictate. A learner of English shook his head in exasperation recently when he learned that it was possible to say *symbol for something*, whereas earlier he had been taught always to use *of* in such a context. For instance, students might be told by their teacher never to include *at* in the following question:

Where are you at?

Yet, they might hear this question (with *at* at the end) uttered by English speakers.

The Form of Prepositions

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

You have encountered prepositions in prepositional phrases many times thus far in this book. You have seen that prepositions can follow nouns (*the mayor of Philadelphia*), verbs (*He ran up the hill.*), and adjectives (*She is good at math.*). By reviewing the phrase structure rule for a prepositional phrase, we can make several observations about the form of prepositions.

PreP → prep NP

First of all, English prepositions are free morphemes, not bound inflectional affixes as their counterparts are in many other languages. The reason that prepositions have the name they do is that they precede nouns—they are *pre*-positions. This contrasts with other languages, such as Japanese, that have postpositions, which follow nouns. This is not to say that English prepositions must always come before nouns. As you have already seen in Chapter 13, it is possible for a preposition to be “stranded” when a *wh*-question word is fronted:

Who(m) are you speaking to?

Where are you from?

Second, the rule tells us that prepositions are followed by NPs. Since the NP is the “object” of the preposition, if the NP is a pronoun, it is an object pronoun. If it is a verbal form, it is a gerund:

for us / to me

for cutting cheese / to seeing you

Third, the symbol “prep” in our rule does not necessarily represent a single word. Although many prepositions, are single words, some complex prepositions consist of two or more words that function as single prepositions, such as *because of*, *such as*, *as for*, *in regard to*, *out of*.¹ In fact, some prepositions that once existed as two words have coalesced: *into* and *onto* are examples that readily spring to mind.

The other phrase structure rules that are relevant to our discussion of the form of prepositions are the ones demonstrating that prepositional phrases follow copular verbs and certain intransitive verbs and transitive adjectives, where they are needed to complete the VP and AP, respectively:

cop + prep: **The car is in the garage.**

Verb + prep: **He lay on his side.**

Adj + prep: **I am averse to the idea.**

As noted by Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999), prepositional phrases can, in some instances, even be premodifiers of nouns. In the following sentence from the Contemporary Corpus of American English COCA, *in your face* modifies *promotion*:

Women's sports goes above the rim with *in your face* promotion, prime time TV, and giant corporate sponsors. (*ABC Nightline*, July 24, 1997)

CO-OCCURRENCE WITH NOUNS

When it comes to using prepositions, a major challenge for learners is choosing the right one. This is so often a difficult task because learners need to know more than just the meanings of prepositions; they need to be familiar with collocational patterns and fixed expressions. For example, with certain noun phrases that are preceded or followed by a preposition, there may be only one possible option; examples are *in my opinion*, *to my mind*, *from my point of view*, *objection to*, *awareness of*, *belief in*. Sometimes, noun phrases are both preceded and followed by prepositions to form multiword clusters, such as *with respect to*, *at odds with*, *in return for*. Some of these multiword preposition clusters include the following combinations (based on Frodesen & Eyring, 2007):

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| in + <i>noun</i> + of | on + <i>noun</i> + of | in the + <i>noun</i> + of | on the + <i>noun</i> + of |
| in case of | on account of | in the course of | on the advice of |
| in charge of | on behalf of | in the habit of | on the basis of |
| in favor of | on grounds of | in the name of | on the strength of |

As for prepositional phrases that postmodify nouns (e.g., *the game of the century*), a select group of only six prepositions do the vast majority of the work. In their grammar based on a 40-million word corpus, Biber et al. (1999) report that 90 percent of postmodifying prepositional phrases begin with *of*, *in*, *for*, *on*, *to*, or *with*, and that *of* is the most frequent, accounting for 60–65 percent (pp. 635–637). The high frequency of *of* is in part explained by its variety of uses. We have already seen it used to express possession (e.g., *the sonnets of Shakespeare*, *the son of the well-known politician*) and quantification (e.g., *a gallon of gas*, *two cans of oil*). We will see other uses for *of* in the section on meaning.

Jackendoff (2008) notes a special construction of noun-preposition-noun, in which the nouns lack determiners. Although a number of idioms fit this description (e.g., *head over heels*, *hand in glove*), the construction to which Jackendoff is referring is used productively with a limited set of prepositions: *by*, *for*, *to*, *after*, and *upon*. There are, however, certain constraints.

Chief among them, the same noun is used in both positions. This noun is neither in the plural nor normally considered a noncount noun. So we could have *man for man* or *car after car* but not **men for men* or **water after water*.

As was noted in Chapter 3, a number of verbs and adjectives co-occur with particular prepositions. As such, they should be taught along with the verbs and adjectives. Here are some examples:

| <i>Verb + prep</i> ^{2,3} | <i>Adj + prep</i> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| to rely on | to be dependent on |
| to detract from | to be free from/of |
| to consist of | to be afraid of |
| to substitute for | to be sorry for |
| to part with | to be content with |

There are some cases where the same verb can be used with different prepositions and where there is little or no change of meaning:

Joe competes with/against his older brother too much.

Sometimes the same verb with two different prepositions will have significantly different meanings; for example:

provide for: **You should provide for your old age now. (make provisions for)**

provide NP with: **The Red Cross provided us with blankets. (gave blankets to us)**

Finally, it is possible for some verbs to be optionally followed by a preposition:

I believe that. It wasn't at all what she had planned.

I believe in that. It wasn't at all what she had planned on.

Here, however, there is a meaning difference. Further, the preposition has the effect of lessening the transitivity of the verb, creating a distance between the verb and its arguments (O'Dowd, 1994).

DELETION OF PREPOSITIONS

As we have seen before, it is possible to delete the preposition. Sometimes the deletion is optional; at other times, the preposition must be deleted.

Optional deletion:

- When the preposition *for* expresses a span of time:
 - We have lived here (for) 12 years.**
 - (For) how long have you owned this house?**
- When the preposition *on* is used before days of the week (when the day is used alone or when the day of the week modifies another temporal noun such as *morning*, *afternoon*, or *night*):
 - Brent went cross-country skiing (on) Saturday.**
 - He bought a new pair of skis (on) Friday night.**

This is not an acceptable option in British English.

- In responses to questions that would cue temporal use of *in*, *at*, *on*, or *for*:
 - (For) How long have you lived here?** (For) Two years.
 - When do you wake up? / (At) What time did you wake up?** (At) 6 A.M.

Obligatory deletion:

- When the temporal noun phrase contains a determiner used deictically (i.e., as seen from the perspective of the speaker such as *last*, *next*, *this*⁴) or when the head noun of the noun phrase contains *before*, *after*, *next*, *last*, or *this* as part of its meaning (e.g., *yesterday*, *tomorrow*, *today*, *tonight*).

I was busy (*on) last Friday.

We will be in Eugene (*on) tonight.

- When the temporal noun phrase contains a universal quantifier like *every* or *all*:

We stayed in Provo (*for) all week.

- When a locative noun, such as *home* or *downtown*, or the pro-adverbs *here* and *there* are used with a verb of motion or direction:⁵

We went (*to) home.

Phyllis walks (*to) here every day.

LEXICAL COMPOUNDING

We cited examples of lexical compounds with prepositions in Chapter 3. As a reminder of the frequent employment of prepositions in compounding, we offer here examples of two prepositions commonly involved in both noun compounds and verb compounds:

over + *noun*

overcoat

overlord

overachiever

oversight

over + *verb*

overdo

overrate

overeat

overcome

under + *noun*

underdog

undertow

undershirt

undergrowth

under + *verb*

underestimate

underrate

underscore

underwrite

The Meaning of Prepositions

CORE MEANINGS AND POLYSEMY NETWORKS

At this point, it is appropriate to revisit the concept of prototypicality, which was introduced in Chapter 3. You will recall that prototypical examples are the best examples of characteristics that the members of a particular category have in common. Thus, for example, a robin (to North American English speakers at least) would be a more prototypical bird than a penguin. Relating this observation to our present concern, we note that prepositions prototypically deal with locating objects in space. For most prepositions, a core meaning that signals a relationship between physical entities can be identified. While their meanings are often extended beyond space, experience has shown that anchoring the meaning of prepositions in spatial relationships is the first step in helping students learn to deal with areas where the meaning is more abstract (Boers & Demecheleer, 1998; Lam, 2009; Matula, 2007). Associating spatial schemata with prepositions, where possible, also helps teachers avoid a common pitfall, which is to define a preposition using other prepositions.

As we noted in the introduction to the chapter, prepositions are polysemous. Rather than viewing one preposition as having multiple unrelated meanings, many linguists

have attempted to map out how a central core meaning is extended over time to include other related meanings (e.g., Deane, 2005; Lakoff, 1987; Vandeloise, 2003). These related meanings form a polysemy network (Tyler & Evans, 2003). But first, we begin with core spatial meanings. Because of our own space limitations, attention is paid mainly to those prepositions that are most frequent in English: *of*, *in*, *to*, *for*, *with*, *on*, *at*, *by*, and *from* (Francis & Kučera, 1982).

LOCATING AN OBJECT IN SPACE

Locating an object in space involves two or more entities. For example, if we say *There is a cottage by the river*, we are dealing with the two entities *cottage* and *river*. A prepositional phrase helps to establish a relationship between entities. Taylor (1993) notes that the relationship is inherently asymmetrical, in that one entity is selected for foregrounding, while the other entity serves as a background. Langacker (1987) refers to the former as the *trajector* and the latter as the *landmark*. In our example above, the preposition *by* signals a spatial relationship between the trajector *cottage* and the landmark *river*.

According to Dirven (1993), *at*, *on*, and *in* are the basic and most general place prepositions. Each signals something about how the landmark is to be understood.

At. *At* denotes a point of orientation, suggesting the landmark be viewed as a point in space:

Meet me at the corner.

One might ask how a street corner, which seems to be naturally conceptualized as a two-dimensional or three-dimensional space, can instead be viewed as a point in space. Lindstromberg (2010) suggests that we take our perspective and zoom out (as we might do with a Google map). From a distance, the corner becomes just a point with which to orient ourselves. The following figure represents the core spatial meaning for *at*, where *TR* stands for trajector and *LM* for landmark:



Applying this image to our example sentence above, the meeting (as the trajector) and the corner (as the landmark) occupy the same point in space.

On. *On* denotes physical contact between trajector and landmark, necessitating viewing the landmark as a one-dimensional line or two-dimensional surface:

Don't sit on the desk.

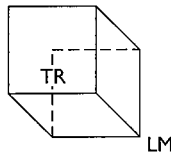
In this case, one might wonder why a three-dimensional desk should be viewed two-dimensionally. The answer is that the preposition puts into focus the surface of the desk, which acts as the landmark for the trajector of a sitting person. It should be noted that the landmark supports the trajector in this core meaning of *on*. This is reflected in the following figure, where the trajector is positioned upon the landmark:



In. *In* denotes the enclosure of the trajector within the landmark, requiring the landmark be viewed as a three-dimensional container:

Stephanie is in the room.

Key to the meaning of *in* is that the trajector (*Stephanie*) is contained by the landmark (*room*). This is reflected in the figure below:



EXTENSION OF MEANINGS

While the spatial sense of these prepositions is most prototypical, their spatial meanings can be extended metaphorically from physical to mental space. Further, the “extensions of meanings of a preposition from physical space via time into more abstract domains do not occur in any haphazard way but follow a path of gradually increasing abstractions, whereby the link with each prior meaning remains obvious” (Dirven, 1993, p. 76). Thus, when prepositions are used in a nonspatial sense, their meanings are not random, but rather are highly motivated.

At. We begin with *at*. Lindstromberg (2010) presents a number of meanings for this preposition. Through them, we see how the core spatial meaning of *at* is extended. Consider the following:

- a. **point along a route:** *at the first stop, at the journey's end*
- b. **point on a scale:** *at 20,000 feet, at 1:30*
- c. **point of focus:** *look at the stars, don't stare at strangers*
- d. **target:** *throw the ball at the player, yell at someone*
- e. **place for activity:** *at work, at a competition*

It is a small step to go from the core meaning of *at* to the first two extended meanings above. All that is necessary is that the landmarks are understood not as isolated points in space but rather as points along a line. We clearly see metaphor here; the line in (a) is a route and the line in (b) is a scale marking height or time. The landmark in (c) is not only a point of orientation but a point of focus. This focus is required in (d) as well, where the landmark is a target. After all, throwing *at* someone means trying to hit that person (as opposed to throwing a ball *to* the person so that he or she can catch it). In the final extended meaning above (e), we see the landmark as a point of orientation that signifies some kind of activity. One is presumably *at work* in order to carry out work tasks or duties. One is *at a competition* in order to compete or to watch the competition.

On. Similar meaning extensions are found with *on*. Below are some of the extensions discussed in Lindstromberg (2010):

- a. **rotation of vertical axis:** *a fly on the wall, a fly on the ceiling*
- b. **exaggerated contact without support:** *a house on the lake, I live on this street*
- c. **basis:** *the outcome depends on what you do*
- d. **topic:** *a lecture on free will*
- e. **burden:** *put pressure on him, drinks are on me*

Starting with a *fly on the floor*, we see that the spatial meaning of *on* can be rotated to explain the examples in (a):

fly on the floor $\frac{TR}{LM}$ **fly on the wall** $TR|LM$ **fly on the ceiling** $\frac{LM}{TR}$

In (b), the sense of contact between the trajector (*house*) and the landmark (*lake*) is not literal and the sense of support is absent (unless, of course, we are talking about a houseboat that actually floats on the lake). For (c), Lindstromberg notes how the landmark is extended from something physical to something more abstract. Just as a desk can serve as a base for a sitting person, *what you do* in the example serves as the basis for *the outcome*. The sense of support from the core meaning of *on* is crucial here. The case of (d) seems similar. The target is supported by the landmark. In the example in (d), we expect the *lecture* to address the topic of *free will* and be supported by information, ideas, questions, etc. regarding this topic. In (e), the senses of contact and support extend to the metaphor of burden. We see a trajector (*pressure*) like a physical burden that the landmark (*him*) must bear.

In. The following meanings for *in* are also considered in Lindstromberg (2010):

- a. functional inclusion or containment:** *a stake in the ground, she held a book in her hands*
- b. span of time:** *in July, in the morning*
- c. action in time:** *complete the task in 30 minutes, the train leaves in 10 minutes*
- d. state:** *in love, in frustration*
- e. path or movement:** *walked in the mall*

In (a), we see an extension from the core meaning of complete enclosure of the trajector within the landmark to one of partial enclosure. For example, with *a stake in the ground*, part of the stake is probably sticking out above the ground. Enough of the stake, however, is in the ground that we understand it to be functionally contained by the ground. *In* is often used when talking about time. Such use, as in (b), treats spans of time like containers. These serve as landmarks that enclose the trajectors. Note how this is different from expressions that use *on* (e.g., *on July 4th*), which Yule (1998) suggests signify a more restricted period or unit of time. Lindstromberg points out that when phrases such as *morning* or *afternoon* are followed by specifying phrases, they prefer the preposition *on* (e.g., *on the morning of the 4th*). He speculates that the postmodified specification gives us a more distant perspective. Rather than morning as a container in which a trajector may be enclosed, it is perceived as a unit of time—one morning distinct from mornings on other dates.

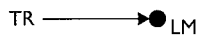
When using *in* for actions in time (c), we see two different meanings. In the first, an action will be performed and completed before the period of time ends (*complete the task in 30 minutes*). This fits well with the preposition's core meaning of containment. The trajector (completion of the task) is enclosed in the landmark (a period of 30 minutes). The second meaning suggests that the action will be performed after the period of time ends (*the train leaves in 10 minutes*). This is an extension of the core meaning; the trajector (the train's departure) sits at the edge of the landmark (a period of 10 minutes). Prepositional phrases like those in (d) reflect the common metaphor in which states are containers (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Into. Prepositional phrases in (e) can be contrasted with those that start with *into*. As Lindstromberg explains, *in* emphasizes containment, whereas *into* emphasizes the path to containment. For instance, *walking into the mall* suggests that the activity started outside and ended inside the mall, while *walking in the mall* could have started outside or could have been performed entirely inside the walls of the mall.

OTHER FREQUENT SPATIAL PREPOSITIONS

We now briefly consider four other frequently occurring prepositions (*to*, *with*, *by*, *from*) and examine how the core spatial meaning of each preposition can be related to additional nonspatial meanings.

To. The core spatial meaning of *to* is represented in the following figure:



The horizontal arrow pointing toward the dot signals that the trajector is oriented toward the landmark. As such, the landmark may be understood as the goal for the movement of the trajector:

Reach to the right.

Tyler and Evans (2003) discuss a number of extended meanings of *to* and give the following examples:

- a. **location:** *In this picture, Diana is standing to my left.*
- b. **contact:** *Apply the soap directly to the stain for best results.*
- c. **attachment:** *He added a fence to the garden.*
- d. **event:** *The captain went to the boaters' rescue.*
- e. **comparison:** *The design of this sweater is inferior to that one.*

It can be noted that (a) differs from the core spatial meaning because the trajector (*Diana*) is not necessarily oriented toward the landmark. For each of the meanings (b–d), it seems the target moves or is moved toward the landmark with the purpose of achieving a goal. Tyler and Evans point out that when making comparisons, we often move one object closer to another in order to examine both. This might explain how the use of *to* in (e) developed to eventually include comparisons where there is no movement.

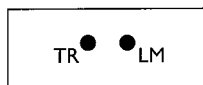
With. The spatial meaning of *with* involves proximity, but with the additional sense that the trajector and landmark are related to each other as part of a functional group. Lindstromberg (2010, p. 215) gives the following examples to emphasize this:

Anne's over there with Jane.

Anne's in her room with a book.

?Anne's in the garden with a table.

The first two sentences are fine because it is easy to picture a functional group of two people talking, or of a reader and a book. The last sentence, however, sounds a bit odd because a person and a table are not so easily understood as part of a typical functional group. In the figure below, the two dots near each other represent the trajector and the landmark:



The surrounding square signals that the trajector and the landmark are somehow related. We can think of the square as framing a functional group. Lindstromberg calls such groups “ensembles” and shows how these are crucial to extended meanings of *with*. Here are some of those meanings:

- a. **part:** *a desk with four legs*
- b. **possession:** *a family with two dogs*
- c. **material:** *to work with stone*
- d. **device:** *to cut with a knife*
- e. **manner:** *to walk with a limp*
- f. **ingredient:** *a curry with chicken and vegetables*

For each of these, we see an ensemble. It may be an ensemble for a thing (e.g., a desk and its parts) or for an activity (e.g., stonework and material).

By. The spatial meaning of *by*, like that of *with*, involves proximity. Consider the following examples:

a house by the sea

the parking lot by the stadium

a camp by the lake

It is understood that there is not much distance between *house* and *sea*, between *parking lot* and *stadium*, and between *camp* and *lake*. Lindstromberg (2010) observes that the location for the relationship between the trajector and the landmark is situated on a horizontal plane. For instance, *by* sounds odd in a scenario where we are dealing with a vertical orientation such as:

?The crane is by the top of the building.

The crane is near the top of the building.

The following figure emphasizes viewing the trajector and the landmark on a horizontal plane:



Unlike *near*, *by* allows for the possibility of contact between the trajector and the landmark. Lindstromberg (2010) points out that you can *take somebody by the hand* but not *near the hand*. When used with verbs of movement, *by* can signal that the trajector goes near the landmark and continues past it:

We drove by the accident.

Given the possibility of contact, the trajector may spend time at the landmark before resuming its movement:

I went by the post office to mail the letter.

Notice how odd the sentence would sound if we used *near* instead of *by*. Some of the nonspatial extended meanings of *by* include:

a. passing time or gradual increase: *day by day, little by little*

b. deadline: *complete the assignment by December 31st*

c. means or manner: *by train, by wrapping duct tape around it*

d. rate or amount of change: *fell by 10%, break the record by 5 seconds*

In (a), we see a metaphorical extension where the passing of time and the increasing of quantity are viewed as movement along a path. For example, we can imagine a series of days one after another, stretching out into the future along a horizontal path. The meaning in (b) also contains metaphorical movement along a path, but here it is understood that the trajector will not continue on past the landmark. The extended meaning of means or manner in (c) may have come about from the sense of path in combination with the allowance of contact between the trajector and the landmark. To go somewhere by train, after all, one needs to board a train physically. The meaning in (d) might be considered an extension of manner. For example:

How did the stock market fall?

Rapidly, dramatically, by 10%!

From. *From* is a source preposition that denotes separation from a point of orientation. The following figure shows that we can view the core spatial meaning of *from* as the reverse of *to*:



The dot, as the landmark, represents the place or source from which the trajector has moved. As such, *from* may be used to express changes in location:

We walked from Victoria Station to Buckingham Palace.

In the sentence above, both *Victoria Station* and *Buckingham Palace* are treated as points of orientation. If we wanted to emphasize the three-dimensional nature of these buildings, we might instead say:

We walked out of Victoria Station and into Buckingham Palace.

Of course, we can talk about source without mentioning goal:

Anna is from Italy.

Here the landmark *Italy* is the point of orientation for the trajector *Anna*. The change of location suggested by *from* is extended to reflect changes in time or state:

The festival lasted from Thursday to Sunday.

Paper is made from wood.

In the first sentence, the landmark (*Thursday*) is the starting point for the festival; in the second sentence, the landmark (*wood*) is the source from which the process of papermaking begins. In the following sentence, we see that source can be extended to cause:

The dog is wet from the rain.

Over/Above. Some prepositions have similar meanings and can often be used interchangeably in certain contexts:

The ceiling is over/above our heads.

In other contexts, however, such prepositions carry different meanings:

They raced over the bridge.

They raced above the bridge.

Those racing in the first sentence might be runners or bicyclists; they physically cross the bridge. In the second sentence, we are more likely to imagine airplanes or birds; they cross the bridge in the air without touching it. Tyler and Evans (2003) propose a difference in the core meanings of these two prepositions; while both prototypically mean that the trajector is higher than the landmark, *over* suggests the trajector is “within potential reach” and *above* suggests the trajector is “not within potential reach” (p. 111).

This subtle difference in the core meaning (the presence or absence of potential contact between the trajector and the landmark) translates to differences in the polysemy networks of *over* and *above*. For example, we see a “covering” meaning in some uses of *over*:

Put the sheet over the couch.

?Put the sheet above the couch.

Given the absence of contact in the meaning of *above*, the sheet in the second sentence would be suspended in air. Among other examples of differences in meaning between *over* and *above*, Tyler and Evans (2003) provide the following sentences:

Camilla has authority over/?above purchasing.

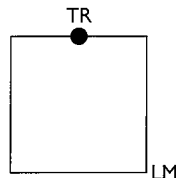
The nearest bridge is about half a mile above/?over the falls.

While a higher vertical position is often associated with a position of control or authority, control usually requires close proximity or even contact. Thus, *over* is preferred in the first sentence. In the second sentence, an emphasis on distance (rather than proximity) favors *above*. In effect, we see how meaning differences between prepositions can be related back to their core meanings.

NONSPATIAL PREPOSITIONS

Two prepositions that happen to be among the most frequent words in English, *of* and *for*, don't have as obvious a prototypical spatial sense as do other common prepositions.

Of. *Of* originally had a meaning that expressed separation in Old English, but over time, this spatial meaning disappeared (Lindstromberg, 2010). Today, this preposition, as noted by Langacker (2008), signals an intrinsic relationship between the trajector and the landmark. To represent the core meaning for *of*, the figure below is adapted from Tyler and Evans (2003):



In this figure, the trajector signified by the dot is part of the landmark signified by the square.

Lindstromberg (2010) discusses the “integrative function” of *of*, in which the preposition integrates the trajector and the landmark. Here are some of the examples of integration that he provides (pp. 205–208):

- a. **part – whole:** *the eye of a storm, the meaning of a word*
- b. **product – source:** *a product of France, a result of hard work*
- c. **act(ion) – agent:** *the howling of dogs, an act of a fool*
- d. **act(ion) – patient:** *the delivery of goods*
- e. **subset – set:** *a kind/type/sort/variety/brand/make/breed of x*
- f. **example – type:** *a sample/specimen/piece/bit of tissue*
- g. **group/amount/unit – entities/stuff/emotion/action:** *a herd of cows, a bit of patience*

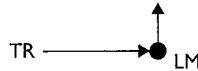
Thompson (1992) proposed the following three basic, more general meanings for *of*:

1. concerning; about
a story of a princess
They told of her heroism.
2. derived or coming from (*X of Y*)
the President of the United States
the headlights of the car
3. having (*Y of X*)
a man of courage
a mother of two

Analyzing the use of *of* in authentic texts, both written and oral, Thompson was able to assign 61 percent of the instances of *of* to one of the three basic meanings. When *of* was spoken, it was most often used for the second meaning. The written samples had a wider distribution of use—although the second meaning was still used in the majority of samples, followed by the first and then the third. Of the instances of the second meaning, most common was its possessive or genitive use (e.g., *the views of the chairman, the umbrellas of Christo*) and its partitive use (e.g., *a can of worms*), accounting for 42 percent of the samples, followed by its originating use (e.g., *the people of Uganda*), which made up 25 percent of the samples.

It should be possible for learners to map any of these meanings for *of* to the figure for *of* above. While doing so may take a bit of creativity, it may help to impart the idea that there is some consistency in meaning (albeit abstract) behind the various uses of this nonspatial preposition.

For. The same approach can be taken with *for*, another preposition with a range of nonspatial meanings. Tyler and Evans (2003) note that “the preponderance of senses associated with *for* are primarily concerned with motives, intentions and purposes” (p. 153). The following figure is an attempt to reflect this intentional aspect found in the core meaning of *for*:



As in the figure for *to*, the horizontal arrow pointing toward the dot signals that the trajector is oriented towards the landmark. In this figure, however, the small vertical arrow atop the dot signals that the landmark is not the singular goal for the (metaphorical) movement of the trajector. That is, the trajector does not move toward the landmark simply to reach the landmark; rather, the trajector moves to the landmark in order to achieve a larger purpose or intention. Tyler and Evans (2003) consider the following nonspatial meanings of *for*:

- a. **purpose:** *She returned for the prize.*
- b. **intended recipient:** *Susan bought the gown for Carol.*
- c. **benefit:** *She raised money for charity.*

In these examples, the landmarks (*prize, Carol, charity*) correspond to the achievement of intentions (that a prize be claimed, that Carol possess a new dress, that charity benefit from donations). Even in uses of *for* that are seemingly spatial in meaning, the goals for the travel (i.e., *the hills* and *Alaska*) are related to the TR's purpose or intention:

- They headed for the hills.**
- She set out for Alaska.**

Although the trajectors given here may never reach the landmarks, what is critical is that the trajectors intend to reach them.

SEMANTICS OF CASE

Another approach to the meaning of prepositions is to examine the second of their major functions. In addition to expressing spatial relationships and their extended meanings, prepositions can be used to assign case; i.e., to mark roles that relate sentence constituents. Fillmore (1968) describes many uses of prepositions as being caselike in nature. We have borrowed his semantic cases and have added a few others that we feel are useful. Note that a preposition may signal more than one semantic case⁶ and that only highly frequent prepositions signal cases. We do not claim that this list is an exhaustive one for semantic cases in English:

1. *by* (agentive): **It was composed by Tchaikovsky.**
2. *by* (means): **We went there by bus.⁷**
3. *for* (benefactive): **I bought the gift for Marty.**
4. *for* (proxy): **He manages the store for the Bakers.**
5. *from* (ablative): **Sherry bought the car from Dave.**
6. *from* (source): **Maria is from Mexico.**

7. *of* (eliciting): **He asked a favor of us.**
8. *of* (separation): **They cleared the field of trash.**
9. *of* (genitive): **The hood of the car was dented.**
10. *to* (dative): **I gave the hat I was knitting to my best friend.**
11. *to* (direction, goal): **We drove to Charlotte, North Carolina.**
12. *with* (instrument): **He broke the window with a rock.**
13. *with* (comitative): **I went to town with Jack.**
14. *with* (joining): **The storm covered the mountains with snow.**

In some types of sentences, the order of cases is significant with respect to the prepositions that occur:

Unmarked order: **Craig planted beans in his yard.** (= somewhere in his yard)
 agent patient locative

Marked order: **Craig planted his yard with beans.** (= all over his yard)
 agent locative patient

Here, the noun functioning as patient, or the thing affected by the action of the verb (i.e., *beans*), normally does not take a preposition; however, it does take *with* when a marked order of cases occurs, altering the meaning of the sentence somewhat. Conversely, the locative *in his yard* takes the preposition *in* when the normal order of cases is followed, but it does not when the marked order occurs. The following pair is another example of this phenomenon:

Unmarked order: **Meg emptied the groceries out of the bag.** (= one by one, no rush implied)
 agent patient locative

Marked order: **Meg emptied the bag of groceries.** (= quickly, all at once)
 agent locative patient

The verbs and the underlying cases of the nouns remain the same. However, the meaning of the sentence changes slightly. In each of the marked orders, the action emphasizes the completeness of the patient with regard to the location—*with* signals that the patient completely covers the location, and *of* separates the patient completely from the location.

MORE PREPOSITIONS

We close this section with the following chart, which gives a glimpse of spatial meanings and extended meanings for other common prepositions. The chart is only partial; more meanings exist for each of the prepositions listed. An unabridged dictionary is a helpful resource for identifying all the meanings of a particular preposition. Lindstromberg (2010) is another excellent source for meanings of prepositions.

| | <i>Space</i> | <i>Time</i> | <i>Degree/Quantity</i> | <i>Other</i> |
|----------------|--|--|--|--|
| about | <i>trajectory moves all around landmark:</i> He ran about the yard. | <i>approximately:</i> about 1 o'clock | <i>approximately:</i> about 70 degrees | <i>concerning:</i> a book about mathematics |
| against | <i>trajectory in firm contact with landmark:</i> The ladder leaned against the wall. | <i>conflict:</i> to work against the clock | <i>conflict:</i> two against four | <i>highlight:</i> against a background of... |

| | <i>Space</i> | <i>Time</i> | <i>Degree/Quantity</i> | <i>Other</i> |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| around | <i>circular or semicircular movement of trajector in relation to landmark: The wind blew around the treetop.</i> | <i>approximately: around 1 o'clock</i> | <i>approximately: around \$2</i> | <i>aimless movement: to stroll around the grounds</i> |
| before | <i>trajector in front of landmark: He stood before us.</i> | <i>earlier than: before 1960</i> | <i>preceding place on scale: 11 comes before 12.</i> | <i>in front of powerful landmark: before the committee</i> |
| below | <i>trajector lower than, and not in potential contact with, landmark: below the surface</i> | | <i>less than: below zero</i> | <i>less good: performed below expectations</i> |
| between | <i>trajector at intermediate point in relation to two landmarks: between the house and the street</i> | <i>time period: between 1 and 2 o'clock</i> | <i>range: between 100 and 110 lbs</i> | <i>discernment: to choose between right and wrong</i> |
| near | <i>trajector close to and not in contact with landmark: the tree near the house</i> | <i>close to: near midnight</i> | <i>close to: near 100 degrees</i> | <i>close to a state: near consciousness</i> |
| past | <i>movement of trajector near landmark and beyond: She ran past the sign.</i> | <i>after: quarter past 10</i> | | <i>orientation: The castle is past the cathedral.</i> |
| through | <i>movement of trajector into and then outside of landmark: The plane flew through the cloud.</i> | <i>duration: through the years</i> | | <i>experience negative situation: to go through an ordeal</i> |
| toward(s) (<i>toward</i> is preferred in Am. E., <i>towards</i> in Br. E.) | <i>movement of trajector in direction of landmark: They walked toward the wall.</i> | <i>approaching time of day: toward morning</i> | <i>movement on scale: toward 0 degrees Celsius</i> | <i>orientation: seats toward the back</i> |
| under | <i>trajector lower than and in potential contact with landmark: The basement is under the house.</i> | <i>less than: to take under an hour</i> | <i>less than: under \$20</i> | <i>unpleasant condition: under attack</i> |

The Use of Prepositions

VARIATION IN USE

As we noted at the outset of this chapter, there are issues of use as well concerning prepositions. For one thing, there appear to be instances (like *the ceiling over/above our heads*) where more than one preposition is acceptable in a given context. Here are some other instances:

spatial proximity: *a house near/by the lake*

time/degree approximation: *happened around/about 10 o'clock; cost around/about \$100*

telling time: *a quarter to/of ten* (of for telling time is not used in British English)

telling time: *a quarter after/past ten*

location along something linear: *the towns on/along the Rhine*

temporal termination: *work from 9 until/till/to 5*

location lower than something: *below/beneath/under/underneath the stairs*

location adjacent: *next to/beside the stream*

The prepositions in each set here appear to have the same meaning. Yet, we should remember that the interchangeability of prepositions is restricted. These prepositions are not interchangeable in all contexts—as we saw earlier with *racing over/above the bridge*. Furthermore, the choice of prepositions within a set may be subject to dialect variation. Not all speakers of English will accept all the alternatives that we propose here.

Throughout this book, we have been invoking the linguistic principle that a language will not tolerate having more than one form with exactly the same meaning and use. It is possible that this principle does not always apply synchronically. While languages do not permit the uneconomic situation of having more than one form with the same meaning and use, languages do change, and at any one point in time, it is possible that one or more of the redundant forms is in the process of dying out with the other(s) remaining or gradually becoming more common.

CO-OCCURRENCE AND PREPOSITIONS

According to Kennedy (1991), it is important to study the “linguistic ecology” of prepositions. One way to do so is to use computer corpora. Kennedy examined the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen (LOB) corpus for incidence of the prepositions *between* and *through*. Although their meanings sometimes overlap, his analysis revealed that there was a striking difference between the words that these two prepositions co-occur with. Kennedy found that nouns typically precede *between* (*difference between*), whereas verbs are the most common word class preceding *through* (*flash through*).⁸ In fact, a quick check of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) reveals that the most frequent word to occur immediately before each preposition fits this collocational pattern: *between* is most frequently preceded by *relationship*, and *through* is most frequently preceded by *go*.

Both *between* and *through* are most commonly used in their spatial senses; however, other nonphysical relations are also very frequent. For example, *between* may be used to signify interaction (*communication between management and employees*), comparison (*there is little to choose between the two*), similarity (*the important parallel between Handel and Beethoven*), and difference (*the discrepancy between expected and observed scores*), while *through* may be used to express means (*through the medium of the English language*) or causation (*dilapidation through lack of maintenance*). Kennedy (1991) goes on to point out that while grammars and dictionaries already provide descriptively adequate accounts of the grammatical functions and possible

meanings in context of *between* and *through*, corpus study goes beyond systemic possibility by adding to linguistic description a statistical dimension based on use in context.

The statistical dimension of corpus work has implications for how prepositions are taught. Kennedy (1991) suggests that to treat prepositions as roughly substitutable parts of speech can be very misleading. As we noted in Chapter 3, we may not have as open a choice as we think in the words that we use in grammatical frames. It may be then that we shouldn't teach certain prepositions in isolation but rather teach them in relation to their occurrence with other words. Kennedy (1990), for instance, in studying the preposition *at* accounted for 43 percent of its 2576 tokens.

Indeed, Mueller (2011) found that Chinese, Korean, and Spanish-speaking English learners performed better when they had to supply a preposition on a fill-in-the-blank test if the preposition appeared in frequently-occurring phrases than when it appeared in less commonly used ones [frequencies attested to by the BNC and the American National Corpus (Reppen, Ide, & Sunderman, 2005)]. For example, students used "with" more often in the second item than the first reportedly because the co-occurrence of *happy* and *with* is more common than *upset* and *with*.

My brother is upset with his girlfriend.

I don't think he is very happy with her grades.

Mueller claimed that "even fairly advanced learners" behaved similarly.

Then, too, Taylor (2002; 2004; 2012) has identified certain productive collocations, which could be taught to English learners. For instance, a useful one with a preposition that we have already mentioned is *X by X*, where *X* is a unit of measurement and the construction itself relates to rate at which a process unfolds, e.g., *day by day*, *page by page*, *moment by moment*.

PREPOSITIONS: A MULTILEVEL STRATEGY

Another finding from Kennedy (1991) will allow us to segue to our final point in this chapter. Kennedy observes that the traditional rule that tells English speakers to use *between* with two entities and *among* with more than two is not observed in the LOB corpus. *Between* is frequently used where *among* might be expected; for example:

[he] would help to establish an enduring peace between nations

In keeping with the previous discussion on the value of using corpora to conduct linguistic research, Todaka (1996) analyzed instances of *between* and *among* in the Brown corpus. Todaka agrees that the traditional prescriptive rule has some influence, but he says that it does not fully reflect the distribution of these two prepositions in the data. Therefore, he recommends a multilevel strategy. At the word level, the central sense that differentiates the two prepositions is that objects with the semantic features of [+ explicit, + separable] take *between*; when the objects are conceived as [+ collective], *among* is used:

A quarrel between the six attorneys . . . (the attorneys are explicit and are seen as individuals)

Among the recipients of the Nobel Prize for Literature, more than half are practically unknown to readers of English. (the recipients of the Nobel Prize are seen collectively)

At the phrase/sentence level, it is possible to account for some of the instances that cannot be explained through the semantic feature analysis by examining their occurrence in collocations. For one thing, *between* takes leftward collocations and *among* takes rightward collocations:

a relation between: **among others**

a distinction between: **among + plural noun + on the whole (e.g., among English-speaking people on the whole)**

a distance between: **among + ranking adjective (e.g., among the best)**

Then, according to Todaka, at the level of discourse, what determines the choice of prepositions, when it can't be explained by semantic features or collocations, is whether or not the object's individual members are identifiable from the discourse context. When they aren't, *among* is more likely to be used:

among all Western Hemisphere languages (the individual languages are not identifiable from the context)

When the object's members are identifiable, *between* is used:

... And lastly, with hypnotherapist and client, there rarely is an affective bond established, whereas in faith healing there almost always is a terrific bond that forms immediately between people.

The object, *people*, is [-explicit]. However, *between* is used because it is clear from the context that the people to whom the speaker is referring are the faith healer and the people consulting the healer. As such, the individuals referred to in the object are identifiable, while not necessarily explicit.

Conclusion

It may be more obvious now that you've read this chapter why prepositions cause such difficulty for ESL/EFL students. Even relatively advanced-level students continue to omit the preposition, as in

***I served the army until June 2004.**
(in)

or use the wrong preposition, as in

***It is predicted that the degree to social adaptation will determine ...**
(of)

or use a superfluous preposition, as in

***I studied in biology for three years.**
(Ø (or majored in?))

Nonetheless, as we have tried to show in this chapter, there is discernible systematicity in how the core meaning of certain prepositions is extended beyond representing spatial relationships. Calling attention to it where it exists will doubtless lighten the learning burden.

Perhaps learning the various meanings and meaning extensions of prepositions is the greatest challenge. However, a pedagogical strategy that enables students to pay attention to their co-occurrence, collocational, and discourse behavior will no doubt facilitate learners' acquisition of these difficult lexicogrammatical forms.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** Distinguishing between obligatory and optional deletion of prepositions can be a challenge for beginning and intermediate level learners. To practice this skill, ask students to determine which sentences are acceptable from a list such as this:

On Saturday we went shopping.

*On yesterday we went swimming.

Tomorrow we will go hiking.

*On every day we have done something interesting.

2. **Meaning.** To help students learn spatial meanings and make basic distinctions between prepositions, a chart with iconic images (like the figures presented in the “Meaning” section of this chapter) can be used in class. Such a chart can assist learners in making connections between the choice of preposition and the dimensions of the landmark. As Yule (1998) suggests, students can be asked if reference points (landmarks) should be considered as points, surfaces, or areas (p. 163). For example, what is the best conceptualization for *beach* and *water* in these sentences?

We were at the beach. // We were on the beach.

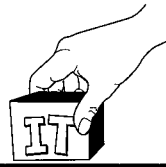
We saw some boats in the water. // We saw some boats on the water.

3. **Meaning.** Clay modeling can also be used to emphasize spatial relationships. Serrano-Lopez and Poehner (2008) asked learners of Spanish to make models that reflected underlying spatial concepts for Spanish prepositions. They can then be guided to create models for English prepositions. In creating their own three-dimensional representations, students are able to explore relationships between trajectors and landmarks in a very hands-on way.
4. **Meaning.** Various techniques exist for training students to see the core meaning of a preposition within different uses of that preposition. Tyler and Evans (2004) make suggestions for how to present extended senses for *over*. For the sense of A-B-C trajectory, they recommend using a flip book (or a video clip that can be segmented into individual frames) with images of a cat jumping over a wall. After showing all the images of the cat moving from one side of the wall (point A) to the other side of the wall (point C), ask students how the cat moved to point C. Then focus on the pages (or frames) where the cat is suspended over the obstacle of the wall (point B). Note that these images correspond to the core meaning of *over*, and that to use the preposition for this extended sense, the cat must land on the other side of the wall.

Yule (1998) encourages learners to examine prepositions used in time expressions (e.g., *at 10 o'clock*, *on September 3rd*, *in January*) and to think about the landmarks within the prepositional phrases. How should the landmarks be perceived? Should they be conceptualized as a specific point in time (*10 o'clock*), a restricted unit of time (*September 3rd*), or an extended period of time (*January*)? This activity can be continued by asking learners to sketch the landmarks in a way that represents the core spatial meanings of the prepositions. Thus, *10 o'clock* might be drawn as a dot—reflecting the landmark of *at* as a point of orientation, *September 3rd* as a flat square—reflecting the landmark of *on* as a two-dimensional surface, and *January* as a box—reflecting the landmark of *in* as a three-dimensional container. Such sketches should help learners make connections between spatial and more abstract meanings of prepositions.

5. **Meaning.** Lindstromberg (1996) outlines a systematic approach to teaching the prototypical meanings of the prepositions,⁹ and how to treat their more abstract meanings derived by metaphorical extensions. He illustrates his approach with the preposition *on*. We don't have the space to report every step of the approach, but here is a synopsis.

Lindstromberg first uses classic approaches, such as the use of Total Physical Response and schemata, to make the prototypical place and goal meaning of a preposition clear; for example:



Put it on the table.

Later, also using pictures, he introduces more metaphorical extensions:

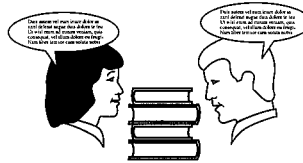
- *on* = *about* or *concerning*: *An article on holidays in France*



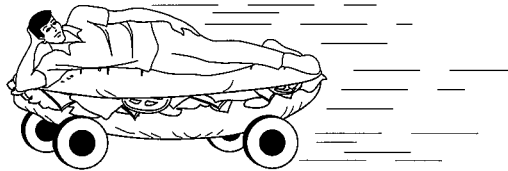
- the burden metaphor: *The engine died on us.*



- the basis metaphor: *The argument is based on copious data.*



- the vehicle metaphor: *It's hard to get through the day on one sandwich.*



Finally, along the way, Lindstromberg contrasts prepositions with overlapping meanings, such as *on top of* versus *on*. As Lindstromberg himself notes, the use of schemata to represent prepositional meaning long predates prototype theory. However, what may be innovative is to use a schemata series to show how the prototype meaning holds throughout its metaphorical extensions.

6. **Meaning.** Another widely used technique for giving students practice in using prepositions to express spatial relationships is to ask students to draw pictures or manipulate bits of paper to create designs. Give each student five pieces of paper in the shapes of a triangle, square, circle, star, and rectangle. Then ask students to pair up. Ask Student A to arrange the shapes in any pattern he or she likes. Student B does not watch. Then Student B has to try to construct the same pattern that Student A has created following A's directions. The students are seated back to back. When the five pieces of paper have been placed, the students should compare A's original to B's copy. Then it is B's turn to create and describe a new pattern for A.

7. **Meaning.** Given the numerous meanings or senses that one preposition can convey, learners regularly encounter unexpected uses of prepositions. Such experiences can be discussed and explored in the classroom. Ask students to look through texts outside of class and to collect one or two uses of a preposition that they find strange or unexpected. Back in class, have students share their examples and challenge them to make connections to core meanings. Doing so often allows students to consider metaphor and metaphoric extensions in language. If you have your own classroom, you may wish to keep a “preposition chart,” to which you or the students can add examples from time to time.
8. **Use.** Because of restricted collocation patterns, learners often have difficulty choosing the right preposition. Dictionaries that include information on collocations can be a useful tool for choosing prepositions appropriately. Online concordancers, like the one found at Tom Cobb’s Compleat Lexical Tutor (<http://www.lextutor.ca/>), are another helpful tool. Encourage students to do their own concordances and to try to identify patterns. For example, if a student is trying to decide between using *central to* and *central for*, he or she could perform concordances for each and find that the former is the preferred collocation. In another example, a student could compare *arrive at* with *arrive in*. A concordance should reveal that the former tends to be used with buildings and events (e.g., *arrive at a hotel, at a party*) and more abstract entities (e.g., *arrive at the answer, arrive at a good decision*), while the latter appears more often with cities, states, and countries (e.g., *arrive in New York, arrive in Guatemala*).
9. **Use.** For reviewing prepositions, find a short biographical statement of someone of interest to your students. Delete all the prepositions, which will primarily refer to time and place. Have your students work in pairs or small groups to fill in the missing prepositions.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide an original sentence illustrating each of the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) or word parts in your example:
 - a. complex preposition
 - b. deletable preposition
 - (i.) optional
 - (ii.) obligatory
 - c. literal spatial meaning of *in*
 - d. metaphorical extension of *in*
 - e. collocation with preposition
 - f. preposition-noun-preposition construction
 - g. co-occurring verb and preposition
 - h. co-occurring adjective and preposition
2. Identify the trajectors and landmarks for the following prepositional phrases:
 - a. I saw the computer on the desk.
 - b. This is a time for healing.

- c. Lessons in managing one's anger are helpful.
- d. In our house is a large piano.
- e. The game began with the referee's whistle.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

3. *If your students produce the following sentences, what norms of Standard English have they not followed?*
- a. *We discussed about our plans.
 - b. *Stuart lives on 160 Western Avenue.
 - c. *Because of the teacher gave us a lot of homework, I can't go.
 - d. *After my evening class, I went to home.
 - e. I live in Washington, D.C. *I like living in here.
4. *A student asks you what of means in the following sentence. What would your answer be?*

It's just the tip of the iceberg.

5. *There are several pairs of prepositions that ESL/EFL students often confuse:*

Source meanings of from and out of:

Paper is made from wood. (source not visibly obvious)

This table is made (out) of wood. (source visibly obvious)

Temporal meaning of in and within:

Come back in 30 minutes. (30 minutes from now)

Come back within 30 minutes. (between now and 30 minutes from now)

Since/For to express spans of time:

I have lived here since 1960. (refers to beginning of span)

I have lived here for decades. (refers to duration of span)

Choose one of these and create an exercise that would help students to detect the difference and be able to use them correctly.

6. *Describe spatial meanings and nonspatial meaning extensions for prepositions not treated in detail in the chapter (such as under).*
7. *How is the following sentence ambiguous?*
I'll tell you the story in five minutes or less.
8. *A great number of idioms include prepositions. Think of a few such idioms (e.g., at a moment's notice, on the dot, in a hurry, by the way, etc.) and see if you can make any connections between the meanings of the idioms and the core spatial meanings of prepositions.*

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For linguistic analyses of English prepositions in addition to those cited above, see:

- Beitel, D. A., Gibbs, R. W., & Sanders, P. (2001). The embodied approach to the polysemy of the spatial preposition *on*. In H. Cuyckens & B. Zawada (Eds.), *Polysemy in cognitive linguistics: Selected papers from the 5th International Cognitive Linguistics Conference* (pp. 241–260). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.
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For helpful resources on collocations, see:

- Simpson-Vlach, R., & Ellis, N. C. (2010). An Academic Formulas List (AFL). *Applied Linguistics*, 31(4), 487–512.
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For specific teaching suggestions, see:

- Badalamenti, V., & Henner-Stanchina, C. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 1* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
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Endnotes

1. O'Dowd (1994), noting that we can't use *out* alone as a source preposition—that is, to mean “from” (**I took it out the box*)—argues that the sequence *out of* is actually a particle followed by a preposition. We will be discussing particles in the next chapter when we deal with phrasal verbs.
2. In the next chapter, we deal with constructions consisting of verb + particle, such as *write off*, which appear to be the same as verb + preposition co-occurrences, but which function differently.
3. Some verbs can take an object NP before the preposition, e.g., *accuse someone of*, *charge someone with*, *prefer something to*, *protect someone from*.
4. These determiners can be preceded by a preposition in nondeictic use; for example, in *on the last Sunday of the month*, *last* means “final,” not the Sunday before the moment of speech. For the same reason, *that* isn't included in our list since it is usually used anaphorically (e.g., *I was ill on that Sunday*), not deictically.
5. Note that the concept of motion or direction is important since *home* may take the preposition *at* with a stative verb:
Is Jackie (at) home?
Also, *here* and *there* can take prepositions in other environments:
Yes. She is (in) there.
6. Rauh (1993) notes that indeed it is the prepositions that assign roles themselves and not just that prepositions express roles assigned by verbs, as is often assumed.
7. Note that *on foot* and *on horseback* are exceptions to *by bus*, *by car*, *by taxi*, *by train*, *by plane*, etc. Also, there are other prepositions, such as *through*, which also express means, such as:
She has accomplished a great deal through hard work. (i.e., by working hard)
8. Although, as Kennedy notes, looking only at adjacent words can be misleading since discontinuous collocations, sometimes several words apart, are quite common. For instance, in the following example from Kennedy's data, there is more of a collocational association between the verb *move* and the preposition *through* than there is between the pronoun *it* and *through*.
I found that I had moved, without realizing it, through the gateway.
9. Although he also includes what we call particles, which we discuss in the next chapter.

Introduction

Consider the following sentences and their analyses, adapted from O'Dowd (1994). How would you describe the role of *up* in each?

- a. **She walked up the street to get a bite to eat.**
- b. **I live up in Springfield.**
- c. **When are you going to clean up your room?**
- d. **I am sorry that I messed you up.**

The most generally agreed upon interpretation would be that *up* is a preposition in the first two sentences. In (a), it is the preposition in the adverbial PrepP of direction *up the street*. In (b), it is once again a preposition. This time, its object, presumably *north*, has been deleted. In (b), the PrepP *up north* is an adverbial of position.

The *up*'s in (c) and (d) are different, structures with which we have not yet dealt in this text. These *up*'s we will call *particles*, which when combined with the verbs *clean* and *mess*, form phrasal verbs. Despite sharing the same form, the meaning of *up* in (c) is quite different from that of (d). In (c), the *up* is syntactically optional, and its contribution to the meaning of the sentence is quite modest. The verb could stand on its own with almost the same meaning; that's not true with the particle in (d). In this sentence, *up* seems to form an integral part of the verb (*mess up*), despite its separation from the verb by the intervening pronominal direct object *you*.

It may already be obvious that we are once again dealing in this chapter with a construction that is very difficult for ESL/EFL students. For one thing, the meaning of phrasal verbs is often noncompositional; that is someone can know the meaning of the verb and the apparent meaning of the particle, but when they are put together, a unique meaning is derived.

Jennifer gave up. (*to give up* = to surrender)

For another thing, there are very few non-Germanic languages¹ that have phrasal verbs. Thus, most ESL/EFL students will find such verbs strange and difficult. Yet they are ubiquitous in English; no one can speak or understand English (at least the informal register) without a knowledge of phrasal verbs. Because they don't realize this, some nonnative speakers of English have a tendency to overuse single lexical items where a phrasal verb would be much more appropriate; for example:

- a. **I arose early this morning.**
- b. **I got up early this morning.**

While sentence (a) is accurate and meaningful, (b) is more appropriate in contemporary usage.

That learners avoid using phrasal verbs has been reported both in the English of native speakers of non-Germanic languages (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Liao & Fukuya, 2004) and in the English of native speakers of Germanic languages (Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993).

An additional challenge for learners is the issue of polysemy. Due to the fact that many phrasal verbs have more than one meaning (or sense), an ESL/EFL student must often learn multiple definitions for the same form. Consider the following examples of *make up* found in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA):

Rogers thinks her husband's expenditures *make up* a big part of their debt. (*Money*, August, 2005)

But the defense had a lot of ground to *make up*. (*NBC Dateline*, April 23, 2010)

But right now, at least, a better comparison might be to the wild West, where, in the absence of authority, people *make up* their own rules. (*ABC Nightline*, May 2, 1994)

According to WordNet 3.1, *make up* has nine distinct senses. Such polysemy in phrasal verbs is common. In fact, Gardner and Davies (2007) identified 559 different meanings for the 100 most frequent phrasal verbs in the British National Corpus.

A final learning challenge involves the conditions governing optional or obligatory separation of the verb and the particle for phrasal verbs used transitively.

- a. **Turn out the lights.** Separation optional (direct object is not a pronoun)
- b. **Turn the lights out.**
- c. **Turn them out.** Separation necessary (direct object is a pronoun)
- d. ***Turn out them.**

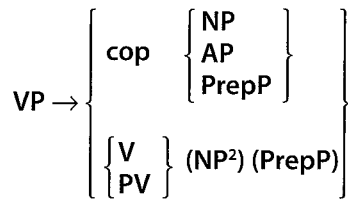
While most analyses of phrasal verbs highlight the pronominal status of the direct object to account for the ungrammaticality of (d), we go beyond this explanation to invoke a pragmatic principle in the section on the use of phrasal verbs in this chapter to explain why (d) is unacceptable. We do this heeding the advice that we offered in Chapter 1—to give students “reasons, not rules.”

The Form of Phrasal Verbs

SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF PHRASAL VERBS

As you have just seen, a phrasal verb (PV) is made up of two (or more) parts that function as a single verb. Phrasal verbs are sometimes called *two-word verbs* because they usually consist of a verb plus a second word, the latter often referred to as an *adverb*. We will refer to the second part of the phrasal verb as a *particle* to show its close association with the verb and to distinguish it from prepositions and other adverbs, although we acknowledge that, as you have just seen with *up*, the same word can fit into more than one category.²

To be able to analyze sentences with phrasal verbs, we need to refine our phrase structure rule for the VP by generating a PV as an alternative to a V:

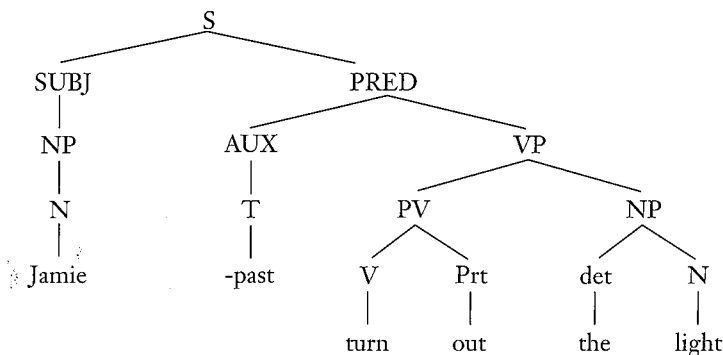


The PV category is then expanded in a new phrase structure rule as a verb and particle (Prt):

$$PV \rightarrow V \ll \text{Prt} \gg$$

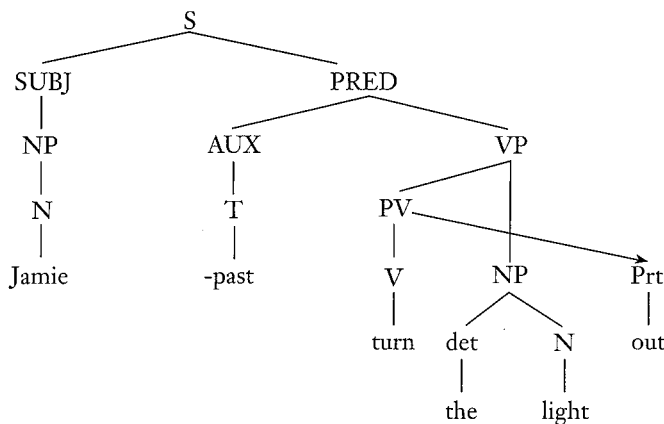
The symbols on either side of the particle indicate that although the particle is part of the phrasal verb, it need not be contiguous with it. Here is the basic structure of a sentence in which the particle follows the verb directly:

Jamie turned out the light.



Now here is a tree where the particle is not contiguous with the verb, but rather is separated from it by an intervening direct object:

Jamie turned the light out.



It is worth noting that the majority of phrasal verbs are formed from a limited number of verbs and particles (Gardner & Davies, 2007; Liu, 2011). Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) identify the following verbs and particles as the most productive, presented in descending order of frequency (p. 413):

Verbs: **take, get, put, come, go, set, turn, bring**

Particles: **up, out, on, in, off, down**

SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF PHRASAL VERBS

Transitive and Intransitive Phrasal Verbs

Like single-word verbs, phrasal verbs can be transitive:

Harold turned on the radio.

Barbara passed out the new assignment.³

I called off the meeting.

[Others include *do over* (repeat), *look over* (examine), *fill out* (complete), *find out* (discover), etc.]

Phrasal verbs can also be intransitive:

My car broke down.

He really took off.

The boys were playing around in the yard.

[Others include *come back* (return), *come over* (visit), *make up* (reconcile), *pass out* (faint), etc.]

Of course, just as some regular ergative or change-of-state verbs (e.g., *open*, *increase*) may be either transitive or intransitive depending on the role of the agent, some phrasal verbs can have this dual function, too; for example:

An arsonist burned down the hotel. (transitive)

The hotel burned down. (intransitive)

Phrasal Verbs That Require Prepositions

Also like single-word verbs, adjectives, and nouns, many phrasal verbs take a specific preposition. Examples of this type of construction are:

go in for

make up for

stand up for

check out of

check up on

close in on

cut down on

drop in on

look down on

look in on

pick up on

get back to

get down to

give in to

break up with

catch up with

come up with

end up with

get along with

get away with

keep up with

make away with

put up with

run up against

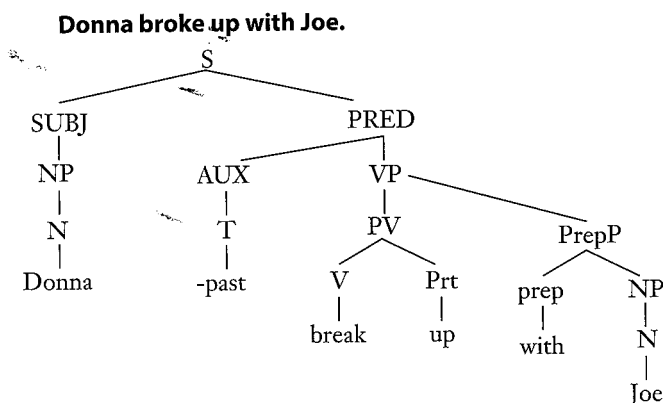
In these expressions, the phrasal verb and preposition must be learned as a unit.⁴

The only thing that can be added to such a string is an adverb or adverbial phrase between the particle and the preposition:

I haven't kept up fully with the work.

Mort has cut down almost completely on his smoking.

Here's how a tree would look with a "three-word phrasal verb" (i.e., a phrasal verb that takes a preposition):



The Separability of Phrasal Verbs

Thus far, we have been discussing characteristics that phrasal verbs share with regular verbs; however, there is one syntactic characteristic peculiar to transitive phrasal verbs: sometimes the particle can be separated from the verb by the direct object and sometimes it cannot. Separation is obligatory when the direct object is a pronoun, a requirement that we will explain later.

Separable Phrasal Verbs

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Mark threw away the ball. | *Mark threw away it. |
| Mark threw the ball away. | Mark threw it away. |
| Rachel looked up the information. | *Rachel looked up it. |
| Rachel looked the information up. | Rachel looked it up. |

[Others include *take up* (discuss), *leave out* (omit), *pass out* (distribute), *bring back* (return), *turn down* (refuse), etc.]

The largest, most productive category of phrasal verbs are these transitive, separable ones. However, we also posit a smaller category of inseparable phrasal verbs, where the particle cannot be separated from its verb. Some linguists would argue that the inseparability is due to the fact that what we are calling a particle is really a preposition, and thus would naturally precede its object. Because the two words appear to have a syntactic affinity (see the section on Syntactic Tests later) and together have a meaning beyond what each word contributes individually, we feel that it makes good pedagogic sense to have a category of inseparable phrasal verbs.

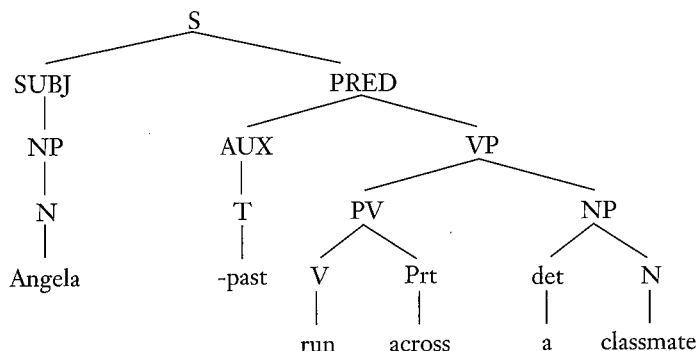
Inseparable Phrasal Verbs

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| I came across an interesting article last night. | I came across it last night. |
| *I came an interesting article across last night. | *I came it across last night. |
| Josh ran into an old friend. | Josh ran into him. |
| *Josh ran an old friend into. | *Josh ran him into. |

[Others include *get over* (recover), *go over* (review), *look into* (investigate), *go for* (attack), etc.]

We have already illustrated the two trees for the separable phrasal verb *turn out*. Here's a tree for a sentence with an inseparable phrasal verb. Since the particle must follow the verb directly in an inseparable phrasal verb, only one tree is possible:

Angela ran across a classmate.



Phrasal Verbs That Are Always Separated

A few phrasal verbs seem to occur only with the verb and particle separated:

How can I get $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{the message} \\ \text{it} \end{array} \right\}$ through to him? (*get... through* = convey; transmit)

***How can I get through the message to him?**

We'll see **{this ordeal
it}** through together. (*see... through* = survive)

?We'll see through this ordeal together.

The reason for the obligatory separation is presumably to avoid the ambiguity with the inseparable phrasal verbs that have the same form but a different meaning:

get through the lesson (*get through* = finish)

see through his excuse (*see through* = not be deceived by)

Such phrasal verbs where the verb and particle are always separated compose a small subcategory of phrasal verbs.

DISTINGUISHING PHRASAL VERBS FROM VERB + PREPOSITION SEQUENCES

Syntactic Tests

At the beginning of this chapter, you saw that a particular word can behave as a preposition in some contexts and a particle in others. Despite the overlap, there is reason to try to arrive at a common understanding of what distinguishes its prepositional use from that of its particle use in a phrasal verb. The following are some of the tests that have been applied (adapted from O'Dowd, 1994, p. 19).

Only prepositions (not particles) allow:

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Adverb insertion | We turned quickly off the road. *We turned quickly off the light. |
| Phrase fronting | Up the hill John ran. *Up the hill John ran. |
| <i>Wh</i> -fronting | About what does he write? *Up what does he write? |

Only particles in separable phrasal verbs (not prepositions) allow:

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Passivization ⁵ | The light was turned off. *The road was turned off. |
| Verb substitution | The light was extinguished. (= The light was turned off.) |
| NP between the two parts | We turned the light off. *We turned the road off. |

In their own list of tests, Darwin and Gray (1999) include these, which fail for phrasal verbs:

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Verb insertion | They figured out the answer. *They figured and worked out the answer. |
| Particle repetition ⁶ | We turned off the light. *We turned off the light, off the TV, and off the stereo. |
| <i>Where</i> questions | John ran up the bill. Where? *Up the bill. |

The rationale for many of these tests is the fact that a preposition makes a natural unit with the NP object that follows it, whereas a particle makes a natural unit with the verb that precedes it. For instance, when we apply *wh*-fronting:

About what does he write?

we produce a somewhat stilted but nevertheless grammatical question because we have fronted a natural unit consisting of a preposition and its object. When we apply this same test to a sentence containing a phrasal verb, however, the question is ungrammatical:

***Up what does he write?**

because it is not possible to separate the particle *up* from the verb *write*, with which it forms a natural unit.

Since we are positing a three-way distinction among separable PVs, inseparable PVs, and verb-plus-preposition sequences, we recommend adopting the following hierarchy of tests. Consider the following examples:

Peter looked up the new word.

Peter looked at the newspaper.

Peter looked into the matter.

1. Can you put the object noun between the verb and the "P"?

Peter looked the new word up. → **Yes = Separable PV** (*look up*)

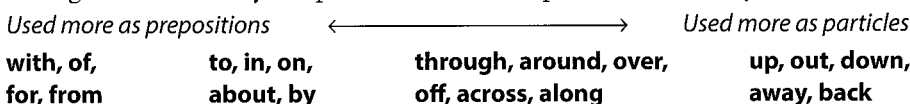
**{ *Peter looked the matter into.
*Peter looked the newspaper at. }** → **No = Inseparable PV** (*look into*) or **V + prep** (*look at*)

2. Can you front the "P" in a *wh*-question?

At what did Peter look? → **Yes = V + prep** (*look at*)

***Into what did Peter look.** → **No = Inseparable PV** (*look into*) (*look into* = investigate)

Another reason for the difficulty in distinguishing particles from prepositions is that their syntactic roles are evolving (O'Dowd, 1994); that is, some of the items that O'Dowd calls "Ps" are becoming more particle-like and others more preposition-like. For now, let us say that it is perhaps more helpful to view phrasal verbs and verbs taking prepositions as opposite ends of a continuum rather than as a categorical dichotomy. Indeed, O'Dowd rejects the hard-and-fast distinction between prepositions and particles; however, she also acknowledges the tendency for particular "P's" to specialize in one syntactic role or another:



Just as Hopper and Thompson (1984) have made the case that the discourse context plays a decisive role in determining whether to construe a particular word, e.g., "lead," as a noun or verb, O'Dowd (1994) suggests that it may be impossible to distinguish a particle from a preposition, apart from the way it behaves in a particular context. O'Dowd hypothesizes that the preposition-particle distinction is evolving as a two-way extension from a single element corresponding to what Bolinger (1971) called an "adprep." The specialization of certain "Ps" as either prepositions or particles reflects their greater degree of grammaticization in one direction or another.

Phonological Test

Another formal difference between a verb + preposition and a phrasal verb is that a particle may receive stress, whereas a preposition usually doesn't:

He loòked up the word. (phrasal verb)

He loòked up the road. (verb + preposition)

Although this test often works to disambiguate prepositions from particles, again there are enough exceptions or marked cases where the preposition is stressed for contrastive purposes:

He loòked úp the road, not down.

that the test is not always reliable.

Another problem for ESL/EFL students is that they have been taught to put stress on the content word. Therefore, they tend to stress the verb rather than the particle (Dickerson, 1994):

***I planéed to tuérn it doúwn.**

Particularly when it is in final position, the particle tends to be stressed:

I planéed to tuérn it doúwn.

The Meaning of Phrasal Verbs

THE PRODUCTIVITY AND IDIOMATICITY OF PHRASAL VERBS

Phrasal verbs are a highly productive lexical category in English. Indeed, Bolinger (1971) refers to the constant new coinage of phrasal verbs as “an outpouring of lexical creativeness that surpasses anything else in our language” (p. xi). As noted previously, certain verbs such as *take* and *get* and certain particles such as *up* and *out* are the most productive items in this outpouring.

However, we have no way of knowing in advance exactly which verb will join with which particle to form a new phrasal verb. Furthermore, there is also a certain unpredictability as to what the meaning of a new phrasal verb will be since many of them are noncompositional or idiomatic—their meanings are different from what combining the meaning of the verb with the meaning of the particle would lead us to expect. For example, it is not immediately obvious how *run* and *out* combine to give the meaning of “to deplete,” (e.g., *We ran out of milk.*)

One pedagogical strategy resulting from the apparently hopeless task of deciphering the meaning of phrasal verbs has been to ask ESL/EFL students to commit to memory long lists of such verbs, along with their meanings. Fortunately, this is not the only solution. There is some systematicity in how meaning is represented in phrasal verbs, and we now turn to exploring this topic.

SEMANTIC CATEGORIES OF PHRASAL VERBS

First of all, the systematicity that does exist becomes easier to perceive when phrasal verbs are not treated monolithically. At least three categories of phrasal verbs can be discerned: literal, aspectual, and idiomatic.

Literal Phrasal Verbs

The first category is comprised of verbs that appear to be a combination of a verb and a directional PrepP. Nevertheless, for pedagogical purposes, we will classify them as phrasal verbs because they function syntactically like verb-particle constructions. Since the particle retains its prepositional meaning, the result is a phrasal verb whose meaning is fully compositional (Jackendoff, 1997). Some examples of literal phrasal verbs are *sit down*, *stand up*, *take down*, *climb up*, *fall down*, and *pass through*. These should not be especially difficult for students to comprehend and to produce.

Aspectual Phrasal Verbs

The second category is one where the meaning is not as transparent, but it is not completely idiomatic either. This category consists of verbs to which certain particles contribute consistent aspectual meaning. (Recall our discussion of the aspectual meaning of verbs, such as of accomplishment and activity verbs, and of aspect, e.g., perfect versus progressive, in Chapter 7.) This category in turn can be subdivided into a number of semantic classes, depending on the semantic contribution of the particle:⁶

- **Inceptive** (to signal a beginning state)

John took off.

(Others include *set out, start up*)

- **Continuative** (to show that the action continues)

—the use of *on* and *along* with activity verbs

Her speech ran on and on.

Hurry along now.

(Others include *carry on, keep on, hang on, come along, play along*)

—the use of *away* with activity verbs with the nuance that the activity is “heedless”

They danced the night away.

(Others include *work away, sleep away, fritter away*)

—the use of *around* with activity verbs to express absence of purpose

They goofed around all afternoon.

(Others include *mess around, play around, run around*)

—the use of *through* with activity verbs to mean from beginning to end

She read through her lines in the play for the audition.

(Others include *think through, skim through, sing through*)

- **Iterative** (the use of *over* with activity verbs to show repetition)

He did it over and over again until he got it right.

(Others include *write over, think over, type over*)

- **Completive** (the use of the particles *up, out, off,* and *down* to show that the action is complete)

—turns an activity verb into an accomplishment

He drank the milk up.

(Others include *burn down, mix up, wear out, turn off, blow out*)

—reinforces the sense of goal orientation in an accomplishment verb

He closed the suitcase up.

(Others include *wind up, fade out, cut off, clean up*)

—adds durativity to a punctual achievement verb

He found out why they were missing.

(Others include *check over, win over, catch up*)

It is clear in these examples that each particle contributes to the meaning of the verb with which it is paired. But how? What enables this contribution of aspectual meaning? The answer lies in metaphor. Like prepositions, particles also extend their meaning beyond spatial relations. In essence, particles allow us to see in concrete terms that which is abstract (Rudzka-Ostyn, 2003).

For illustrative purposes, let us examine how *up* contributes to the inceptive and the completive aspects. It may at first seem odd that the same particle is used in the following:

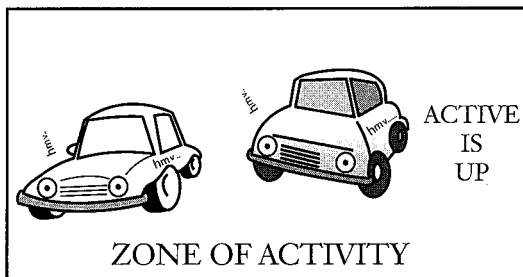
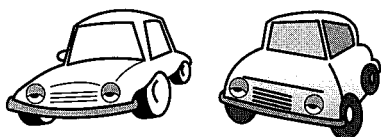
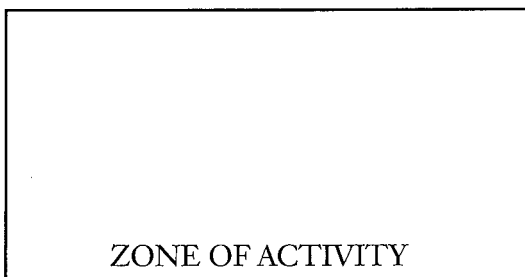
Start up your engines!

Drink up! We must be going.

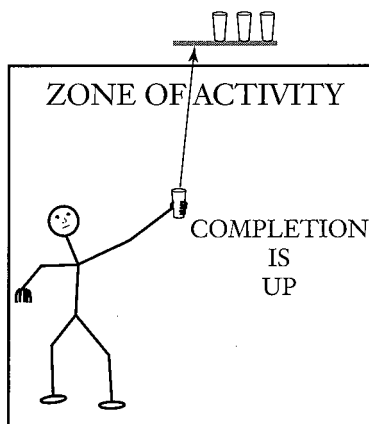
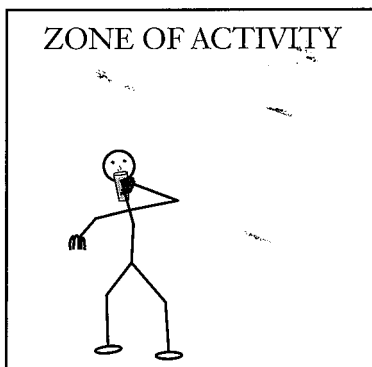
The first is an imperative to start something (a car engine), whereas the second is an imperative to finish something (a drink). The use of *up* for both, however, makes sense if we connect physical direction to human goal-directed experience. Things are often raised or lifted in order for us to do something with them; at the same time, things are often raised or lifted when we are finished with them (Lindner, 1981). From a cognitive linguistics perspective, such physical human experience translates into orientational metaphors like ACTIVE IS UP and COMPLETION IS UP (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Particles, in turn, encode such metaphors into the meaning of phrasal verbs (Yasuda, 2010). Returning to the phrasal verbs above, *up* in *start up* emphasizes that something goes from inactive to active—a silent engine is now running; *up* in *drink up* emphasizes completion—an entire beverage is consumed. For more examples of nonspatial extended meanings of particles, see Neagu (2007) and Rudzka-Ostyn (2003).

White (2012) encourages learners to visualize such meaning extensions. He does this by directing students to draw pictures that depict a phrasal verb's meaning and that include a space for action or activity called the *zone of activity*. Student drawings should reflect metaphorical movement or position, as signaled by the particle, in relation to the *zone of activity*. The two examples given above might be sketched in the following way:

1. Start up your engines!



2. Drink up!



Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs

As we have been saying, many phrasal verbs are idiomatic, such as *chew out*, *tune out*, *catch up*, *put off*. It seems difficult, if not impossible, to figure out the meaning of the verb by combining the separate meanings of its parts. This is not to say that the situation is hopeless, however. Cognitive linguistics holds that even idiomatic phrasal verbs may be understood as compositional (Alejo-González, 2010) and, as such, are conceptually motivated (Kövecses & Szabó, 1996). This view is possible when we look for metaphor not just in the particle, but in the verb as well. As noted by Morgan (1997), metaphorical senses may exist in the particle, the verb, or both. Consider the following examples from COCA:

I think we're at a point, though, that voters are, you know, voters *tune out* these ads.
(CBS *Face the Nation*, October 27, 2002)

Repairs on the space station had to be *put off* and assigned to a new crew because of his medical problems. (PBS *Newshour*, July 22, 1997)

Obviously, no actual tuning is taking place, and nothing is physically being put anywhere. We can, however, motivate these phrasal verbs by appealing to general conceptual knowledge. For instance, when we tune something like a musical instrument, we bring it into focus and pay careful attention to it. Adopting the terminology in White (2012), we could say the instrument is in our zone of activity. It follows that if we wish to stop paying attention to something, we can *tune it out* (of our zone of activity). The second example can be motivated with a food analogy. Putting food on a plate is placing that food into the zone of activity (the activity of eating). When we put food off of the plate or outside the zone of activity, that food is not ready for immediate consumption. By analogizing plans or actions with food, it follows that *putting* them (e.g., repairs) *off* means to postpone them. Of course, because motivation is not the same as prediction (Kövecses & Szabó, 1996), idiomatic phrasal verbs are sure to remain a serious challenge for learners. Yet, attention to and awareness of underlying metaphors should help learners make better sense of idiomatic language (Boers, 2004).

POLYSEMIOUS PHRASAL VERBS

As was noted in the chapter introduction, many phrasal verbs are polysemous. A verb such as *check out*, for instance, can have many meanings. A partial inventory might include:

1. **I need to check out by 1 P.M.**
2. **I went to the library to get a book, but someone had already checked it out.**
3. **Be sure to check it out before you buy it.**
4. **Check it out!**
5. **If you have fewer than 10 items, you can check out in the express lane.**

While the meanings of some of these verbs are related, they illustrate the point of the polysemy. Just as one form can have many meanings, we know that it is also possible to have several verbs with the same or similar meanings. This brings us to the question of use.

The Use of Phrasal Verbs

REGISTER

Level of Formality

As was noted in the chapter introduction, phrasal verbs are extremely common in the informal register. When the choice exists between a phrasal verb and a single-verb counterpart derived from Latin,^{7,8} a native speaker will often use the phrasal verb. Corpus studies by Biber et al. (1999) and Liu (2011) found phrasal verbs to be much more frequent in the registers of fiction and spoken English than in newspapers and academic English. Yet it is important to note that phrasal verbs are not completely absent from formal registers. Liu identifies the following as extremely common in academic writing (presented in descending order of frequency): *point out, carry out, take on, make up, set up, bring about, take up, break down, sum up, carry on, rule out, follow up*.

Field

Another use of the term *register* is relevant here. As we saw in Chapter 2, register in systemic-functional linguistics can also refer to the social activity in which the language is being used and what is being talked about. Certain phrasal verbs are associated with a particular field for which there are no concise alternatives. For instance, *check out* in example 1 will likely be understood to mean checking out of a hotel room. It would be difficult to describe the same action using any other verb. Liu (2011) suggests that a number of the most common phrasal verbs found in newspapers (e.g., *pay off, take over*) may be so frequent in this register in part because they “are expressions used to describe business dealings” (p. 678).

The field-specific use of the term *register* is also pertinent in explaining the non-use of phrasal verbs in certain contexts. Airline personnel often favor Latinate verbs over phrasal verbs, perhaps to assist international travelers to comprehend announcements. For instance, in the days when cigarette smoking was permitted on all airplanes, passengers were requested to “extinguish all smoking material,” prior to landing, rather than the more common “put out your cigarette.” Thus, the field-specific use of the term *register* is pertinent in explaining the use or non-use of phrasal verbs in certain contexts.

THE ISSUE OF PHRASAL VERB SEPARABILITY

Principle of Dominance Revisited

Erteschik-Shir’s (1979) principle of dominance, which we discussed with regard to indirect objects in Chapter 19, accounts for cases when separable phrasal verbs require that an NP direct object intervene between the verb and particle. If the direct object is a noun, it can either go between the verb and the particle or after the particle. If the direct object is a pronoun, its referent has already been made clear in the discourse context, and therefore it would be nondominant. By virtue of its nondominance, it does not occupy the final position in the sentence if this can be avoided; thus, a pronoun direct object is put between the verb and its particle:

- He poured out his heart.** (direct object is a noun—either order is syntactically possible)
He poured his heart out.

He poured it out. (direct object is a pronoun—it must be placed

***He poured out it.** between the verb and particle)

On the other hand, if the direct object contains a significant amount of new, complex, or unpredictable information, its insertion between the verb and the particle would interrupt the cognitive unity of the verb and particle and make processing very difficult:

?He poured a brand new can of green paint that was on sale out.

Thus, if the direct object is not a pronoun, and especially if it is a long and elaborate NP, it would occupy the more dominant position after the particle. You will recall that this is the conventional position for new, discourse-salient information:

He poured out a brand new can of green paint that was on sale.

Corpus studies by Gries (2003) and Lohse, Hawkins, and Wasow (2004) confirmed that the length of the direct object (among other factors) predicts the likelihood that the particle will not be separated from the verb. In fact, the studies found that when the direct object is comprised of a noun phrase of three words or more, there is a dramatic increase in the preference for the particle to come immediately after the verb. If the direct object is not dominant, then the particle can occupy the dominant final position:

He cried his eyes out.

The ability of the particle to occupy this position is in keeping with the fact that it can bear primary stress. Phrasal verbs thus afford English speakers the opportunity to put part of the verb into end-focus position. Such syntactic flexibility does not exist for Latinate verbs where all the semantic features are conflated into a single word (E. O’Dowd, personal communication).

Sentences with Separable Phrasal Verbs, Direct and Indirect Objects

We also noted in Chapter 19 that indirect objects that are nondominant are likely to precede direct objects. In the following, the indirect object—*the country singer*—marked by the definite article as having already been introduced into the discourse, is nondominant:

The mayor of Nashville gave the country singer a tour of the city.

What happens when the direct object and indirect object occur in a sentence with a separable phrasal verb? As you might expect, the order of particle, direct object, and indirect object depends on the dominance of the objects.

If the indirect object is dominant, then the sentence could occur with the particle directly following the verb and the indirect object in sentence-final position:

John paid back his loan to the bank.

To reinforce the dominance of the indirect object, the direct object could be followed by the particle, separating the direct and indirect objects:

John paid his loan back to the bank.

If, on the other hand, the direct object is the dominant NP, then the order would be:

John paid the bank back his loan.

It is not likely that the verb and its particle would occur contiguously in such a sentence because it would be in conflict with the fact that the indirect object is nondominant:

?John paid back the bank his loan.

Finally, it is possible to have a sentence order in which the particle follows both the direct and the indirect objects:

John paid the bank his loan back.

Here, the direct object, *his loan*, is more dominant than the indirect object, *the bank*, but *his loan* is still less dominant than when it was in sentence-final position. It's the particle *back*, which is in sentence-final position and therefore dominant.

In short, while there is nothing wrong with the rule that says that if the direct object is a pronoun it goes between the verb and the particle, it is simply incomplete and offers no explanation for why the object should be placed in this position. Furthermore, it offers no explanation for why one word order is preferred over another when there is a syntactic choice—that is, when the direct object is a noun. We now know that there is a reason for the rule and a greater generalization to be made. The rule is not arbitrary; rather, it reflects the higher-order principle regarding the ordering of constituents with different information status: when an object is nondominant, it will be placed between the verb and particle of a separable phrasal verb.

Conclusion

Phrasal verbs are not unique to English, but they are different enough from verbs in many languages of the world, and common enough in English, to pose a significant learning challenge. Perhaps the most challenging dimension is in the meaning, for while there is some semantic systematicity, there is still enough idiomaticity to cause difficulty for students. Students will also be challenged to make appropriate choices when it comes to the dimension of use—when to use a phrasal verb versus a single-word verb and when to split the particle from its verb.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** When learning new phrasal verbs, students can be asked to label them as intransitive, inseparable transitive, and separable transitive. Grammar textbooks such as Fuchs and Bonner (2006) and Wisniewska, Riegenbach, and Samuda (2007) provide activities that reinforce these classifications. Of course, students should be sensitive to the fact that some polysemous phrasal verbs appear in different forms. For instance, the separable transitive *Check it out!* versus the intransitive *It's time to check out.*
2. **Form/Meaning.** Many teachers like to begin to introduce the concept of phrasal verbs using Total Physical Response (TPR). Giving commands such as *stand up*, *turn around*, *turn on the light*, *turn off the light*, *go back to your chair*, *sit down*, and so forth will get students used to the fact that certain verbs in English are composed of two forms, and the exercise will have students begin to associate meaning with certain common forms. In fact, Biber et al. (1999) found that the majority of common phrasal verbs are activity verbs, which are obviously conducive to TPR.
3. **Form/Meaning.** Certain routines can be pantomimed in which a number of different phrasal verbs can be incorporated. The teacher reads the routine the first time and mimes the actions with the students. Later, the students can give the routine and mime it. Here are two examples:

Morning Routine:

My alarm goes off at 6 A.M. I wake up. I turn off my alarm. I stretch in bed, and then I get up. I go to my closet and take out my slippers. I put them on . . .

Telephone Routine:

I want to call up my classmate. I pick up my phone, and I scroll through my contact list. I pick her name out. My classmate doesn't answer, so I hang up. I will call back later.

4. **Meaning.** Margaret Olin (personal communication) suggests creating a “phrasal verb wall.” Whenever the class or an individual student discovers a new phrasal verb, someone should write the phrasal verb on a chart and indicate whether it is transitive/intransitive, and separable/inseparable. Next, a picture should be drawn illustrating its meaning. Finally, a sentence in which it is used should be added. The chart should be mounted on the wall (or on a long roll of paper) and added to throughout the term.
5. **Meaning.** When presenting phrasal verbs, you might consider organizing them by orientational metaphors, as was done in Kövecses and Szabó (1996), Boers (2000), and Yasuda (2010). Some examples from these studies include:

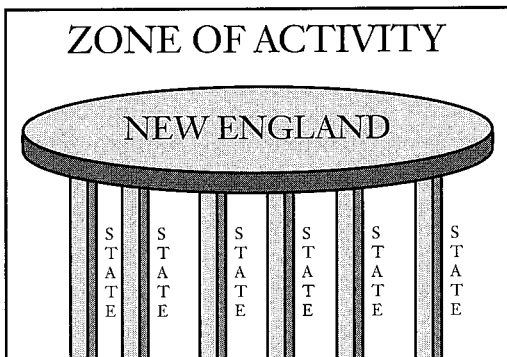
Completion is up (*chew up, dry up, eat up, use up*)

Visible is up (*open up, look up, show up, turn up*)

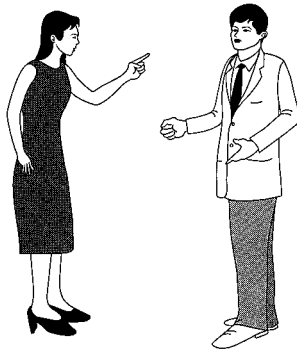
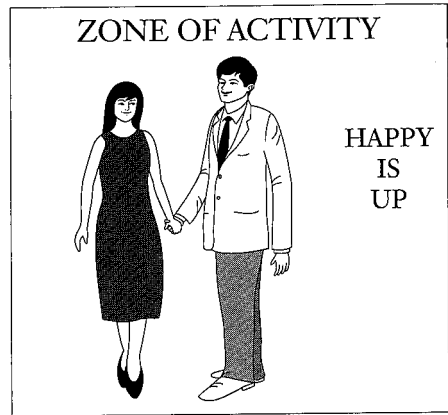
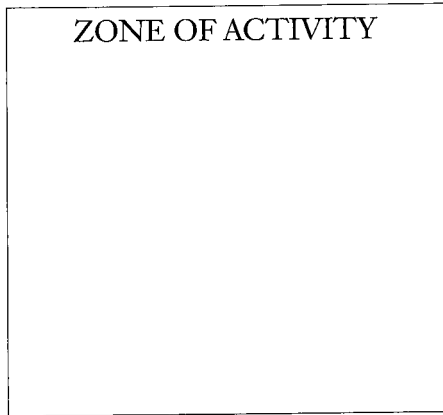
The researchers found that such presentation facilitated students' short-term learning of phrasal verbs. Teachers wishing to implement this approach may wish to consult Rudzka-Ostyn (2003), which lists phrasal verbs by particle and further distinguishes these by conceptual metaphors.

6. **Meaning.** Drawing may be used to promote deeper appreciation for the role of metaphor in phrasal verbs. Give students a few phrasal verbs in context and ask them to draw pictures that show the meaning of each. Instruct students to include in their drawings a representation of how the particle reflects movement or position in relation to the *zone of activity* (White, 2012). To make it clear what the task is, you may first need to sketch out a few examples yourself. For example, sketches for the phrasal verbs in the following two sentences might look like this:

1. Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine *make up* New England.



2. After their argument, the couple *made up*.



This technique may be a particularly effective way to encourage students to see connections between various senses of polysemous phrasal verbs. It also requires students to infuse some creativity into their vocabulary learning.

- 7. Meaning.** Another way to tackle polysemy in phrasal verbs is to make use of concordancers. Liu (2011) suggests an activity where students search an individual phrasal verb in online corpora and then examine the concordance results line by line in order to determine each specific meaning of the phrasal verb. Among other resources, the COCA (<http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>), the British National Corpus (<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>), and the Compleat Lexical Tutor (<http://www.lextutor.ca/>) offer free online concordancing.
- 8. Use.** Linnea Henry and Lauren Parker (personal communication) have created a dialogue that uses forms that are accurate and meaningful, but are not what a native speaker of English would probably say. The students are asked to first listen to the dialogue and then to read it, choosing phrasal verbs from a list they are given so that they are more appropriate for conversational English. Here is a partial list of verbs the learners are given: *ask out*, *fix up*, *call up*, *get up*, etc., and our adaptation of their dialogue:

Linnea: Hey, Lauren, I heard that guy finally asked you for a date.

Lauren: Yeah, well, actually, Pam arranged the meeting.

Linnea: How did it go?

Lauren: Well, first he telephoned me at 8 in the morning, and it was necessary for me to leave my bed. I was quite annoyed. It was Saturday morning. Then he said he wanted to have a date with me that night.

Linnea: So, what happened?

Lauren: Well, he was supposed to arrive at 7, but he didn't. He stumbled when he entered. I think he may have been drinking. He came an hour late because he said that his car had stopped working. Then he said there was no more gas in it.

Linnea: I would have abandoned him.

Lauren: Yeah. I told him to leave. I said that I couldn't take any more.

9. **Meaning/Use.** Trebits (2009) recommends combining corpus-based data with practice activities. She suggests activities that prompt students to make inferences about use as well as meaning. Students can compare the concordance results for two similar phrasal verbs (Trebits's own example is *set out* and *set up*). Careful examination of the data will allow students to identify what types of things appear as subjects for each phrasal verb and what types of things appear as direct objects. Awareness of such patterns should assist students in making appropriate decisions on a traditional gap-fill activity where missing particles must be inserted. For specific examples of practice activities, see Trebits (pp. 478–479).
10. **Use.** The following activity gives students practice with particle placement in separable phrasal verbs. Prepare a number of cards, each listing a noun phrase. The noun phrases should range from those that are long and complex to those that are simple. For example:
- the old TV that no longer worked
 - the bread covered in green mold
 - an uneaten piece of pizza
 - piles of mounting garbage
 - the broken chair
 - the trash
 - it

On the board, write two simple sentence frames, such as:

They threw _____ out. (*Pattern 1*)

They threw out _____. (*Pattern 2*)

Students take turns drawing a card and plugging it into one of the two sentence frames. Teachers should monitor direct object placement. Are the students using Pattern 1 for the shorter and Pattern 2 for the longer noun phrases?

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. *Provide original example sentences to illustrate the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples:*
- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| a. verb + preposition | f. phrasal verb plus preposition |
| b. transitive phrasal verb | g. literal phrasal verb |
| c. intransitive phrasal verb | h. aspectual phrasal verb |
| d. separable phrasal verb | i. idiomatic phrasal verb |
| e. inseparable phrasal verb | j. phrasal verb that is always separated |

2. Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences:
 - a. Graeme warmed the soup up.
 - b. Anne puts up with murder.
 - c. Deidre brought the cart back to the market.
 - d. Rachel looked up the tree.
3. Explain why the following sentences are ungrammatical or, at least, awkward.
 - a. *We called our neighbors on.
 - b. *I looked the report that Phyllis wrote in Dallas last week over.
 - c. *I gave back Larry the money.
 - d. ?He showed just as all the work was done.
 - e. ?Amber placed back the things that had fallen down from the shelf.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

4. If your students produce the following sentences, what would you tell them?
 - a. *Donna can't put up the noise anymore.
 - b. ?We discontinued our engagement.
 - c. *After two hours the candle had burned off.
 - d. *Kim worked out her muscles at the gym.
 - e. *The child ate up it.
5. Why is the term "two-word verb" somewhat inaccurate?
6. Apply the syntactic tests in this chapter to the following sentences to determine if the verb + "P" is a phrasal verb or a verb + preposition.

We came across that issue yesterday.

My brother and I always fought over the prize in the box of cereal.
7. In Chapter 21, we contrasted the prepositions of English with the postpositions of other languages like Japanese and Korean. Consider the following examples. Is it really accurate to say that English has no postpositions? Explain your answer.

Bonnie roamed over the world.

Bonnie roamed the world over.
8. Make up a routine like the two examples we gave in Teaching Suggestion 3, which takes place at the library.
9. We gave check out as an example of a verb that really has no single verb paraphrase in its use in a hotel context. Can you think of any other phrasal verbs that have no single verb counterparts?

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For a usage-based analysis of the development of idiomatic phrasal verbs, see:

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Endnotes

1. The Germanic languages include English, German, Dutch, Flemish, and the Scandinavian languages. Some Bantu languages apparently also have phrasal verbs (P. Schachter, personal communication).
2. Others have tried to accommodate the overlap among adverbs, prepositions, and particles by referring to a certain word that follows the verb as an “adprep” (Bolinger, 1971), a “prepticle” (Clark, 1995), and even just a “P” (O’Dowd, 1994).
3. Sometimes a phrasal verb can be used both transitively and intransitively with different meanings, e.g.,
Barbara passed out the papers. (distributed)
Maxine passed out. (fainted)
 It is best to consider such homophonous items as two different phrasal verbs with two separate lexical entries.
4. Although the overwhelming majority of phrasal verbs taking prepositions are intransitive, there are also a few idiomatic transitive phrasal verbs that take prepositions where the direct object pronoun it intervenes between the verb and the particle, e.g.,
She put it over on him. (= She deceived/fooled him.)
I’ll make it up to you. (= I’ll return the favor/good deed.)
5. This test refers to the passivization of direct objects. We know from Chapter 19 that it is possible for indirect objects to be the subjects of passive sentences:
Dan’s organization was awarded the contract.
6. We have drawn from the following sources to compile this list: Fraser (1976), Brinton (1988), O’Dowd (1994), and Jackendoff (1997).
7. Of course, Latinate verbs are not true synonyms. Neither, for that matter, are other verb + adverb sequences. As we saw in the discussion of the meaning of phrasal verbs, the particle often connotes some aspectual sense. For instance, in *check out* in sentence 3, the particle conveys a sense of goal orientation (the goal being the speaker’s satisfaction), which is lost in a paraphrase like *examine* or even the verb + adverb sequence *check thoroughly*.
8. O’Dowd (1994) shows the Latinate verbs themselves are frequently made up of the same sort of morphological composition as verb-particle combinations. For instance, one of the paraphrases of the phrasal verb *check out* might be *examine*, which in and of itself carries the Latin directional preposition *ex-* (“out of,” “from”) as its prefix.

Nonreferential Subjects: Ambient *It* and Existential *There*

Introduction

The words *it* and *there* fill a number of grammatical roles in English. In Chapter 16, *it* was called a personal pronoun, the same form being used for both subjects and objects:

A: Has anyone seen the newspaper?

B: The last time I saw *it*, *it* was in the living room.

In Chapter 6, we referred to *there* as a pro-adverb, since *there* can substitute for another adverbial:

A: Where exactly did you see it?

B: (Pointing) I saw *it there* (on the coffee table).

While the forms themselves, then, may not be new, their meanings and uses as nonreferential subjects (the focus of this chapter) are different and, therefore, warrant special treatment of their own.

These subjects have gone by many names: “nonreferential,” “dummy,” “empty,” and so forth. What these terms have tried to capture is that, unlike the referential *it* and *there* that we have just exemplified, these subjects appear to have no clearly definable antecedent or referent, hence the label “nonreferential”:

It's raining. (What is the *it* that is raining? What does *it* refer to?)

There's a lot of noise here. (Where is *there*? What does *there* refer to?)

Without a clearly identifiable referent, *it* and *there* are free to serve very useful purposes in English. Consequently, they occur frequently.

Despite their many occurrences, nonreferential *it* and *there* can cause difficulties for ESL/EFL students. Speakers of Spanish and Italian, for instance, who speak languages that do not require an explicit subject the way English does (for every nonimperative and nonelliptical sentence), may produce sentences that are ungrammatical in English, such as the following:

***Is raining.**

Speakers of Cantonese might translate literally from their language into English and say:

***Rain is plentiful.**

Speakers of other topic-comment languages—Japanese, for example—may preserve the topic-comment structure of their native language and instead of producing sentences with *there*, such as

There are 27 students in Taro's school.

produce sentences such as

***Taro's school is 27 students.**

***Taro's school students are 27.**

***In Taro's school students are 27.**

(Examples from Sasaki, 1990)

Another strategy that speakers of Japanese employ is to use the English verb *have*, which allows for the topic-comment word order of Japanese while generating well-formed sentences in English:

Taro's school has 27 students.

But even this type of sentence is not the conventional way of expressing the same meaning in English as the sentence with a *there* in subject position:

There are 27 students in Taro's school.

Another problem for speakers of topic-comment languages is the formation of “pseudo relatives” (Yip, 1995). It has long been known that some Chinese students of English use the nonreferential *there* frequently (Schachter & Rutherford, 1979, p. 3). Many of these sentences with *there* subjects appear to be missing a relative pronoun:

***There were lot of events happen in my country.**

There were a lot of events that happened in my country.

It is understandable why an ESL/EFL teacher might be inclined to correct sentences like this by supplying the relative pronoun *that*, in addition to making other modifications. However, as Rutherford (1983) shows, such ungrammatical learner utterances do not stem from omission of the relative pronoun, but rather from conforming to Chinese grammar. The *there* is presumably seen by learners to correspond to a topic introducer in Mandarin Chinese, which goes before a subject.

Then, too, the fact that English has two nonreferential subjects, *it* and *there*, is a potential source of confusion to those ESL/EFL students who have no such structure—or to those whose languages have only one such form, the meaning of which may overlap with the meanings of English *it* and *there*. This state of affairs and students' association between the pro-adverb *there* and place, sometimes results in students producing errors such as

***There is very nice in Korea.**

Any similarities that the two nonreferential subjects share are far outweighed by many obvious differences: *it* and *there* occur in different contexts and have different meanings—which is why, although both are nonreferential, we will adopt different conventional names (i.e., *ambient* “*it*” and *existential* “*there*”).

Finally, learners of English struggle with matters of use, such as when it is appropriate to say

There's a book on the table.

rather than

A book is on the table.

By now, you know to look for a difference in use between these last two sentences. The guiding principle that we follow in this book is that if there are two forms in a language with the same core meaning, there must be a difference in their use. We therefore explore in this chapter when *there* is used and when it is not.

Because *it* and *there* overlap only in the fact that both are nonreferential subjects, we depart from our usual means of organizing chapters and instead treat the form, meaning, and use of each of these separately.

Ambient *It*

THE FORM OF AMBIENT *IT*

The form of the ambient *it* is fairly straightforward. Since nonimperative sentences require a subject in English, *it* can fill this function when no other subject is present. This form therefore acts as a subject, always taking a singular verb, usually a form of *be*:

It was a very blustery autumn day.

What time is it?

THE MEANING OF AMBIENT *IT*

Chafe (1970) and Bolinger (1977) refer to the nonreferential *it* as “ambient.” Ambient *it* is grammatically necessary, but lexically vague. The meaning of ambient *it* derives from the rest of the sentence, which makes it clear to the listener/reader what is being discussed. It is found commonly in the following expressions:

| | | | |
|--------------------|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Time</i> | It is six-thirty. | It is early. | It will be my birthday. |
| | It is August 28. | It is Wednesday. | It was 1880. |
| <i>Distance</i> | It is about 100 miles to Boston. | | |
| | It is just two stops on the Metro. | | |
| <i>Weather</i> | It is cloudy. | It's getting dark. | It's 20 degrees! |
| | It is freezing. | It's going to snow. | It's windy. |
| <i>Environment</i> | It is never crowded at the Pontiac Hotel. | | |
| | It gets a little rowdy on the ninth floor. | | |

At first glance, these *its* may appear to be referential. It is true that we could ascribe noun antecedents to some of these. We could say that in the sentence:

It is six-thirty.

the *it* is a personal pronoun replacing the noun phrase *the time*:

The time is six-thirty.

However, this analysis won't explain the *it* in an associated *wh*-question:

What time is it?

***What time is the time?**

And the same anomaly holds for other corresponding questions; for example:

It/The day is Saturday. What day is it?

***What day is the day?**

Moreover, it is impossible to find referents for some cases of *it*:

It is raining.

What is raining? (?The clouds are raining. ?The weather is raining. *The rain is raining.¹)

It gets a little noisy, especially when everyone is warming up.

What gets noisy? (The room gets a little noisy. ?The space gets a little noisy.
?The ambience gets a little noisy.)

Therefore, for both these reasons—first, the fact that unlike the personal pronoun *it*, the nonreferential *it* requires no antecedent or anaphoric referent, and second, there is often no conceivable referent for the *it*—linguists conclude that the nonreferential *it* takes its meaning from the ambience or environment in which it occurs. “We can therefore acknowledge the rationale for calling *it* a dummy—its meaning is too unspecific to articulate, and speakers have no clear conception of its referent. But that precisely is its crucial semantic property” (Langacker, 1991, p. 377). What Langacker means is that by virtue of ambient *it* being a linguistic chameleon, it is extremely versatile in that this form can be identified with many different aspects of the linguistic or situational context.²

THE USE OF AMBIENT *IT*

As we have seen, ambient *it* occurs in a number of simple statements and questions in English dealing with time, distance, weather, and other environmental conditions. Use of ambient *it* allows such questions or statements to be shorter and less redundant than they would be if content nouns such as *time* and *weather* were used instead. Note that certain nouns do exist to deal with these notions, which, when used, make a statement more formal or more precise:

The time is (now) 10 o'clock.

The weather today will be fair and cool.

Such formal statements are sometimes used in media. The issue of when speakers of English use a content noun like *time* or *weather* versus when they use ambient *it* would be a good topic for a future research study.

There is another nonreferential *it* that is used in subject position as well, one that has an important discourse management function:

It is human to err; it is divine to forgive.

However, we prefer to call this *it* by another name, *it-extraposition* or *anticipatory it*, because it anticipates the real subject (e.g., *to err*; i.e., *To err is human*). This *it*, therefore, has a different function, one that we address in Chapter 32, on complementation.

Existential *There*

THE FORM OF EXISTENTIAL *THERE*

As we mentioned earlier, you have encountered *there* before as a pro-adverb. As a pro-adverb, it can be used anaphorically (*Let's go to London. There, we can see the crown jewels.*) and deictically—its meaning is understood within the context in which it occurs. One of the manifestations of this deictic meaning is that it is usually accompanied by some gesture, such as finger pointing. It is also stressed:

THERE is the little boy who looks after the sheep.

Deictic *there* calls attention to a location relative to the speaker. Contrast deictic *there* with the unstressed *there* in the next sentence:

There is a little boy who looks after the sheep; his name is Little Boy Blue.

The *there* in this sentence does not refer to any specific location. It is not accompanied by any typical gesture, it is followed by an indefinite noun phrase, and it does not bear stress; in fact, its vowel may well be reduced [əɹ]. The *there* in the second sentence is called the existential *there*.

In addition to these differences, the existential *there* has certain syntactic properties that the deictic *there* does not share. One is that the existential *there* is the subject of the clause; the deictic *there* is not. To prove this, we can see that since deictic *there* is an adverb, it can be moved to another position in the sentence. This is not true of the existential *there* because as the subject, it is clause initial:

Existential *there*: ***A little boy who looks after the sheep is there.** (Putting *there* at the end of the clause forces a deictic interpretation to the *there*; that is, such an order is not possible with existential *there*.)

Deictic *there*: **The little boy who looks after the sheep is THERE.**

Existential *there* can also be used in question tags, given its status as a subject:

Existential *there*: **There is a little boy who looks after the sheep, isn't there?**

Deictic *there*: ***THERE'S the little boy who looks after the sheep, isn't there?**

Another way that the existential *there* constructions differ from deictic constructions is the possibility of negating existentials, but not deictics:

Existential *there*: **There isn't anyone in the building.**

Deictic *there*: ***THERE isn't the tenant.**

Other languages have separate forms for existential and deictic functions. French, for instance, has the deictic *voilà* ("there is") and the existential *il y a* ("there is"). French also has the deictic form *voici* ("here is") (Bergen & Plauche, 2005). English, too, has a deictic *here*, which affords the possibility for another syntactic test for distinguishing the two, by substituting *here* for *there*:

Substitute *here* for existential *there*: ***Here's a little boy who looks after the sheep.** (forces a deictic interpretation)

Substitute *here* for deictic *there*: **Here's the little boy who looks after the sheep.**

In other words, deictic *here* can alternate syntactically with deictic *there*, but not with existential *there*.

Bergen and Plauche (2005) add that semantically and pragmatically, the French and English *there*-constructions bear a particularly close resemblance to one another, an especially surprising fact given their different historical origins. Interestingly, they attribute the similarity to the fact that as languages evolve, they may reach convergent evolutionary solutions, especially for such vital functions as deictics and existentials.

There and Subject-Verb Agreement

As a subject, *there* is followed by a verb, most often the copula verb *be*. In terms of subject-verb agreement, existential *there* is much more problematic than ambient *it*, which is always followed by a singular verb. In contrast, as you saw in Chapter 4, in sentences with *there* subjects, the verb may be singular or plural depending on the number of the noun phrase following the verb. Whether or not the *there* is contracted with the singular present tense *be* verb (i.e., *there's*) is also a factor,

It is rather strange that the NP following the verb determines the form of the verb, in that a basic property of subjects in English is their power to govern the agreement of the verb. The explanation for this phenomenon is that the noun phrase following the verb would have been the subject of the sentence rather than *there* had other considerations not intervened.

We discuss these other considerations in the section on the use of existential *there* later in this chapter. For now, the point is that the NP following the verb is not an object but rather is notionally (though not morphosyntactically) the subject.³ Sometimes, such an NP is referred to as the *logical subject*, as opposed to the *grammatical subject*.

To make matters more complex, there is also considerable variation from speaker to speaker with regard to the form of the verb, with many speakers opting for a singular verb when the verb is contracted with *there*, no matter what the number of the following noun is. As we saw in Chapter 4, the processing constraints of spoken discourse encourage speakers to simplify their choices (Crawford, 2005). Here is an example, from the British National Corpus, where *there's* is used with a plural logical subject (Martinez Insua & Palacios Martinez, 2003, p. 263):

There's six of the best. (CKG 24; wt. leisure)

Following *there* with a singular form of *be* might occur because speakers are treating nonreferential *there* as analogous to nonreferential *it*, which is always followed by a singular verb. Another explanation is that speakers choose the singular form of the verb due to the awkwardness of articulating two consecutive weak syllables with final “r” sounds, which the choice of contracting the plural form of the verb necessitates:⁴

There're problems here. (there're /ðərər/)

It may also be the case that *there* and *is* have become fused into a single, monomorphemic formula (Breivik, 1981). Whatever the reason, in a study of spoken discourse, Celce-Murcia and Hudson (1981) confirmed that *there's* predominates in informal speech, even when a plural noun phrase follows the verb, which Meechan and Foley (1994) also found in their study of speakers of Canadian English. However, examining a subcorpus of the British National Corpus totaling 1 million words (divided equally between speech and writing), Martinez Insua and Palacios Martinez (2003) found less nonconcord in British English, in both speech and in writing, than in previous accounts. When British English speakers did use singular verbs with plural notional subjects, they did so when the notional subjects were elaborate, presumably because their length and their complexity added to the processing challenge of composing such sequences:

...there's all sorts of text that one could mention (FLS 127; sp. business)

Cos even in the shadow area you see there's still nice textures shown on the front steps here and on this wall here is in shadow... (HM2 80; sp. leisure)

It is probably unrealistic of ESL/EFL teachers to expect their students to maintain the traditional subject-verb agreement rule in their speech when many speakers of English ignore it. ESL/EFL students should probably be taught to use the rule since the number-agreement distinction is still expected in formal—especially written—usage; however, they should also realize that, when speaking, speakers of English often use *there's* with following plural nouns.⁵ Another strategy might be to teach ESL/EFL students to say *there's* instead of *there is* because the contraction makes the lack of agreement more acceptable:

There's too many term papers for this course.

***There is too many term papers for this course.**

A related issue, which was discussed in Chapter 4, is that the proximity principle tends to apply when conjoined noun phrases follow *there*, with the result that the verb *be* agrees with the number of the nearest noun phrase rather than the number of both noun phrases combined, which was the older prescriptive agreement rule. This tendency occurs even in writing, a finding confirmed by Martinez Insua and Palacios Martinez (2003):

There are two boys and a girl in the room. (The first conjunct is plural.)

There is a girl and two boys in the room. (The first conjunct is singular.)

?There are a girl and two boys in the room. (Traditional prescriptive agreement now sounds strange to many speakers of English.)

Furthermore, Martinez Insua and Palacios Martinez (2003) also found that if there was intervening material (usually adverbials of some sort—below *at least* and *only about*) between the verb and the notional subject, nonconcord was more likely (p. 279):

And there's *at least* eight discs available at the present time and more could be made available. (F7U 234; sp. educational and informative)

And there's *only about* three marks for it anyway so... (FM4 1023; sp. educational and informative)

Verbs Other Than Be with Existential There

Even though *be* is by far the most frequent verb following existential *there*, it is by no means the only one. Other groups of intransitive verbs can occur with existential *there*:

- Verbs of existence or position (*exist, live, dwell, stand, lie, remain*, etc.)

There exist several alternatives.

At the edge of the forest, there dwelt a troll.

- Event verbs that describe something happening, developing, or materializing (*develop, arise, appear, emerge, ensue, happen, occur*, etc.)

There arose a conflict.

There ensued a dispute.

- Verbs of motion or direction (*come, go, walk, run, fly, approach*, etc.)

There came three suspicious-looking men down the street.

Along the river there walked an old woman.

The Use of the Indefinite Determiner with the Logical Subject

You may have noticed, in the example sentences beginning this discussion of *there*, that the only morphological feature that distinguished the sentence with deictic *there* from the sentence with existential *there* was the choice of determiner before *little*:

THERE'S the little boy who looks after the sheep. (deictic *there*)

There's a little boy who looks after the sheep. (existential *there*)

The indefinite article in the sentence with the existential *there* indicates that the noun phrase following the verb—that is, the logical subject, *boy*—is not identifiable. Some reference grammars state that only logical subjects with indefinite determiners occur with existential *there*. As a matter of fact, all the example sentences presented thus far in this chapter agree with this stipulation. As you will see a little later, however, it is possible to use the definite article with the logical subject. Nevertheless, this “rule of thumb” requiring use of the indefinite determiner with the logical subject provides a clue as to the meaning of the existential *there*.

THE MEANING OF EXISTENTIAL THERE

Although we introduced the existential *there* by contrasting it with deictic *there*, we should also acknowledge that it is not mere coincidence that the two share a form. Lakoff (1987) invokes the notion of prototypicality to explain the isomorphism between deictic and existential *there*. As we saw with spatial prepositions, cognitive linguists assume that the spatial or deictic notion is the core meaning, while the meaning of the existential *there* is an extension of it.

As opposed to physical space, the existential *there* designates a mental space in which some entity is to be located. The common use of the indefinite determiner with the logical subject supports the notion that *there* functions to introduce something into mental awareness (Bolinger, 1977)—to assert its existence, hence its name: the *existential there*. Unlike the deictic *there*, what is said to exist does not have to be in the current speech context. Bolinger claims that asserting the location of something or asserting the existence of something are opposite sides of the same coin—i.e., if you locate something, it exists; if something exists, it is located somewhere.

It is clear, then, that although *there* is not a content word in the usual sense, to call *there* a dummy subject ignores the fact that it does serve a function other than simply filling the subject slot. Also, if *there* merely existed to fill the subject slot, this would leave us with no explanation for why two well-formed sentences, such as the following, are both possible:

There is a pen on the table.

A pen is on the table.

To answer such a question, we must turn to use.

THE USE OF EXISTENTIAL *THERE*

The Presence and Absence of There Contrasted

While Langacker (1991) prefers to say that *there* designates an abstract setting as opposed to some mental space, he concurs that the basic function of an existential *there* clause is presentational; that is, a *there* clause brings an element into awareness. *There* serves as a signal to the addressee to direct his or her attention toward an item of new information (Breivik, 1981). The result of *there* being in clause-initial position, then, is that everything that follows the verb can be accorded new information status, including the logical subject. In other words, by using *there* as the subject, the usual distribution of given and new information in a clause can be maintained, where what is new is located in the predicate.

While in some cases, the use of *there* may seem syntactically optional,⁶ presumably the discourse context would favor one sentence over another in a given instance. For example, one can imagine staging a play and being given stage directions describing a scene, one sentence of which might be “A pen is on the table.” If I am on the telephone, on the other hand, and I express the need for a writing implement to someone in the room, I would be put off by the use of this marked sentence without *there*. I would interpret it as saying that I should know that a pen is on the table. I would find “There is a pen on the table” much more appropriate, as the entire predicate gives me the information I am seeking. In other words, the use of *there* may be syntactically optional in certain cases, but it has a pragmatic function centering on appropriate use in context or discourse.

In fact, in his search of the Survey of English Usage, a corpus of 450,000 words of spoken text and 300,000 words of written texts of modern, educated British English usage, Breivik (1981) was able to find very few instances of sentences where the logical subject with an indefinite determiner occupied subject position. One example he did find occurs in a text describing the interior of a department store selling electronic equipment:

The first floor houses the real heart of the store—the hi-fi departments—but there is much else here also . . . A headphone bar is also on the first floor.

The last sentence in this text, one that illustrates what we have been calling the “stage-direction use”, presumes the existence of the first floor and provides one visual detail about it. The clause with *there* after *but* in this text asserts the existence of something—here *much*

else, which is then elaborated on with a concrete detail, the one provided in the last sentence. Sentences like these without *there*, then, appear to be infrequent and very restricted in use, limited to providing details for a scene whose existence has already been established or can be presupposed.

Although we will have more to say about this in the chapter on adverbials, for now we should note that it is also possible to move a locative prepositional phrase to the initial position in a sentence:

On the table is a pen.

This word order has the effect of treating the logical subject as new information much as the use of *there* does. This word order is still marked, however, not unlike the stage-direction use. Also, moving a phrase to the initial position without *there* can be done only with locative phrases:

?This month are a lot of holidays.

This month, there are a lot of holidays.

There are a lot of holidays this month.

Finally, we should also note that *there* can still occur when the adverbial locative phrase is preposed:

On the table is a pen.

On the table there is a pen.

But *there* is more likely to be used if the logical subject is more abstract:

?In the house was no sign of life.

In the house there was no sign of life.

As Bolinger (1977) notes, “The less vividly on stage an action is, the more necessary *there* becomes” (p. 96).

Various Uses of There

Since the function of *there* is to focus the listener on what follows the verb, the information status of this part of the clause must somehow be new in the moment; that is, the listener must have been unaware of the referent or must have forgotten about it and needs to have his or her memory “reactivated” (Chafe, 1970). The following uses of *there* fall out from this deduction (based in part on Lakoff, 1987):

- Presentational use (introduces a new referent to the discourse, which then becomes the topic):

There are several alternatives. We could go shopping first and then take in a movie . . .

- Locative use (introduces the logical subject and its location):

There are several books on the table.

There used to be a tree behind the garage.

- Ontological use (strongly asserts the existence of something where the verb *exist* can appear instead of *be*, and the main verb bears stress):

There exist five prime numbers below twelve.

There is a Santa Claus.⁷

- List:

A: What is there to see in Tucson?

B: There's the Sonora Desert Museum, Saguaro cactus plants, the Biosphere, a dude ranch . . .

B's reply seems to violate the constraint about logical subjects with *there* in subject position needing to take indefinite articles. Rando and Napoli (1978) explain this phenomenon by saying that what is being asserted in such a conversation is the existence of a list, leaving the items on the list free to take definite or indefinite determiners depending on their uniqueness. The way that Ward and Birner (1995) explain the use of definite articles here is to say that the speaker is presumably giving the listener new information about things to see in Tucson, so the NPs are still nonspecific to the listener, with the choice of definite or indefinite article determined by the uniqueness of the noun referred to:

- Suggestion (J. Hilder, personal communication):

A: Where is he going to sleep?

B: Well, there's the couch.

- Reminder (The speaker is reminding the listener of the existence of someone or something; a verb like *remain* can easily serve this function):

A: Before we leave on vacation, there remains the problem of what to do with the dog.

B: Oops. I almost forgot.

A variation of a reminder is when something is acknowledged by the listener as new in the moment:

A: I feel depressed, and I am not sure why.

B: I am sorry, but remember, you often feel this way in mid-winter.

A: Yes. Well, there is that.

In this example, it is not that the link between the season and A's feelings is unprecedented in A's life; it is just that in the moment, A accepts B's explanation as a plausible account for why A is feeling depressed, an explanation that apparently did not occur to A until B raised it. In other words, B's explanation was interpreted by A as new-in-the-moment information, what we earlier noted as a status required of an NP in this position in a sentence with *there* as a subject. The NP itself may be specific, as is *that*, but what it represents is a new or reactivated awareness to the listener (Abbott, 1997; Ward & Birner, 1997).

- Narrative use (In narratives, *there* is used to introduce a new element into the narrative, while simultaneously sketching a scene or background to the story):

There once lived an old woodsman in a little cottage deep in the woods.

With narrative use, it is possible to have an entire VP, not just a verb, precede the logical subject:

Suddenly, there burst onto the scene an out-of-town volunteer fire department.

For discourse reasons involving the need to elaborate new information, which are now familiar to you, it would be odd for the logical subject to be preceded by a lengthy VP unless it itself is of sufficient length:

?Suddenly, there burst onto the scene a fire department.

Other Uses of the Definite Determiner with the Logical Subject

Contrary to what some reference grammars indicate, it is further possible to use a definite determiner with the logical subject, even when it is not on a list. Bolinger (1977) and Rando and Napoli (1978) have pointed to the existence of sentences such as the following:

There's the/a most unusual man standing over there.

There will soon appear the definitive edition of *Hamlet*.

There never was that problem in Austin.

In each case, however, there is an explanation for the use of definiteness. In the first sentence, *the* or *a* is used because of an odd fact about certain English superlative adjectives that permit either a definite or indefinite article to be used in such a context to mean "very

unusual” (see Chapter 35 for more details). In the second sentence, the uniqueness explanation applies (there can only be one “definitive” edition of any work); and, in the third explanation, *that problem*, the *that* is being used anaphorically to refer to something previously mentioned.

In other words, it is too simplistic to say that the logical subjects in existential *there* constructions always take indefinite determiners.

There in Oral Discourse

Much of what has been presented in this chapter is a sentence-level analysis. Our treatment would not be complete if we did not also examine the use and distribution of *there* at a level above the sentence as well. Sasaki (1991) has done so for spoken American English. Sasaki’s data are taken from oral transcripts representing three different speech genres: informal conversations, radio talk-show discourse, and oral narratives. Transcripts were analyzed for topic continuity using a modified version of Givón’s method (1984) of measuring referential distance. Although there were qualitative differences among the three different genres, the general trends that Sasaki observed were obtained for all three genres:

- Logical subjects in sentences with *there* tended to have low topic continuity. They were not previously mentioned. This finding is consonant with our observation that logical subjects represent new information and thus tend to be the topic of subsequent clauses, not previous ones.
- Although the logical subjects introduced specific new information, it was often a subcategory of some previously mentioned topic.
- The elements following the logical subject of existential *there* sentences were found to have high topic continuity; that is, their central referents had been previously mentioned in the discourse. In this way, the postlogical subject element was functioning as what Fox (1987) calls an “anchor” or a “linker” between the new topic introduced by the logical subject and the preceding part of the discourse.

Here is an example from Sasaki’s (1991) paper (interview recorded earlier by Jan Frodesen) to illustrate the third trend as manifest in an interview with a Great Lakes shipping captain:

1. **Well, the thing is, that when you see the boat at the dock and you see all**
2. **that steel and all that riveting, you think well, there’s nothing gonna**
3. **harm this boat, and when you’re out on a big storm, you’re wondering**
4. **what’s keeping it all together.**

In this extract, we see that the central referent of the postlogical subject element, *this boat* in line 3, connects *the boat* in line 1 to *it* in line 4. In other words, it is this postlogical subject element that contributes to the cohesion of the discourse.

Sasaki’s (1991) is the only study we know of that examined the use of *there* in oral discourse. There has been much more study of *there* in written discourse, and it is to this research that we turn next.

There in Written Discourse

Huckin and Pesante (1988) examined a corpus of 100,000 words taken from 29 written English texts representing a variety of genres, ranging from reference books to magazines. They found four purposes for *there* clauses in written discourse. The basic function was to assert existence, the other three being more specific extensions of this basic function: (1) presenting new information, either as setting a new topic or (2) making isolated topic shifts, and (3) using *there* sentences to summarize.

Ahlers (1991), building on the work of Huckin and Pesante (1988) and Sasaki (1991), examined 100 tokens of *there* gathered from 18 sources—undergraduate college readings from a variety of disciplines, as well as other academic writing. Ahlers found that there were

two primary ways that *there* functions in academic expository writing: general-particular and listing. The general-particular function is one where a new topic is introduced in a general statement beginning with *there*, which is followed by clauses that offer supporting details or elaboration. Here is an example from Clyde Kluckhohn's *Mirror for Man*, taken from Ahlers's data. Prior to this excerpt, Kluckhohn has been discussing various differences among cultures:

All this does not mean that there is no such thing as raw human nature. The members of all human groups have about the same biological equipment. All people undergo the same poignant life experiences, such as birth, . . .

Kluckhohn makes a generalization with a *there* statement and then provides other details in subsequent supporting statements.

Fully three-quarters of the tokens of *there* in Ahlers's (1991) data fit into subcategories of the general-to-particular function. The other one-quarter of the examples exemplified the listing function, which we have already mentioned with regard to the sentence level. Here's an example from Ahlers's data of the listing function as the author uses it in discourse to list places in Portugal. This is an example from Eleanor Perenyi's "Escape to the Past," *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1982, pages 39–42:

Portugal abounds in old Ritzes. I use the term generically; there is a real Ritz in Lisbon, a modern one with no atmosphere at all, and we didn't stay at it. Our choice was the Avenida Palace, which fills the bill by being very grand (tapestries, red plush, chandeliers) and rather shabby. Grander, less shabby, and twice the price is the Infante de Sagres at Porto. Its high-Edwardian decor is appropriate to a city where the wine trade has been so heavily involved with England that there is even an English club, founded in 1785 . . .

The final study of written discourse that we shall summarize here is one of research reports published in journal articles (Thomas & Hawes, 1994). The authors of this study did not focus exclusively on nonreferential subjects, being more generally interested in the syntactic choices available to writers for making reporting statements. Of the 129 reports they analyzed, approximately 10 percent had ambient *it* or existential *there* as subjects, followed by the *be* verb. A reporting statement with *there*, in particular, was used to assert the existence of evidence. It seemed to be used when the writer was submitting evidence of a certain kind in connection with a point that he or she was making. These themes co-occurred with nouns like *evidence* and *support*, such as *There is increasing support for the hypothesis*. Here is an example from their data:

Chronic bronchitic patients do seem to suffer from high levels of psychiatric disorder, and a close liaison between chest physicians and psychiatrists or clinical psychologists may contribute to the effectiveness of patient management. There is some evidence that alleviation of psychiatric symptoms is associated with a reduction of breathlessness.

The first sentence is making a tentative claim by the writer. The writer then brings in evidence in the form of a report as the basis for making the claim. The structure allows the foregrounding of the word *evidence* and the clause qualifying it, so that the relationship between the two sentences—the claim and the supporting evidence—is highlighted.

All of the examples of *it* used in these research reports are of *it*-extraposition or anticipatory *it*, a structure with which we deal in Chapter 32.

Conclusion

We have seen that the scope and complexity of sentences with nonreferential subjects is far greater than what most reference grammars would lead us to believe. It has been claimed in some traditional grammars that such forms as ambient *it* and existential *there* are mere fillers, to be avoided in any formal writing. What our investigations in this chapter have suggested instead is that *it* and *there* serve important, albeit unconventional, functions. While they may not be semantically rich themselves, the semantic chameleon nature of ambient *it* and the function that existential *there* has of introducing new information make these constructions important grammatical devices in discourse management. It is not good advice, in our opinion, to tell ESL/EFL students to avoid them in writing.

It is difficult to pinpoint the challenge for these structures in general. Perhaps the greatest challenge lies in the one to which we have devoted the most space—the use of *there*. Teachers have to help ESL/EFL students get beyond simply using the *there + be + NP + LOC* construction. Often this is done by describing familiar scenes. For example, to introduce the existential *there*, the teacher may say, “There is a whiteboard in the front of the classroom. There is a door in the back of the classroom,” etc. This approach may be the easiest for beginning-level students, but it gives them a misleading impression. If the function of existential *there* is to introduce new information, the information after the verb must truly be new, not something that everyone knows already or can perceive in the environment. The other learning challenge lies in helping students to understand the distinction between these two nonreferential forms, *it* and *there*.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** Ask students to listen to a weather report before coming to class. Ask them to report what they have heard. Alternatively, bring into class a weather report and guide students in making statements with ambient *it* using the weather information.

It was hot yesterday.

It was 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

It was dry.

It was windy.

2. **Form.** Use a calendar to get students to practice asking and answering questions concerning the day, month, year, and date.

What day is it? It's Friday.

What month is it? It's March.

What year is it? It's 2015.

What is the date? It's March 20, 2015.

3. **Form.** Bring a map into class and ask students to make statements about distances and travel times.

How far is it from Pittsburgh to Cleveland? It is about 100 miles.

How long does it take to drive by car? It takes about two hours.

4. **Use.** Here is an adaptation of an activity that Stevick (1982) offers, which he calls “Islamabad.” Have a student describe a place that has special significance to him or her. As the student describes the scene, he or she places Cuisenaire rods on a table to indicate the location of things in the scene. Each statement by the student is repeated

by the teacher. If the student makes a grammatical error while describing the scene, the teacher does not correct it but rather recasts the student's statement using the correct form. For example:

Student: I am thinking of a place in my hometown. It is the plaza in the middle of the town. It has a big fountain. (The student places a rod down to mark the fountain.)

Teacher: I see. There's a big fountain in the center of the plaza.

Student: Yes, and it has bench around the fountain. (The student places rods around the first rod to represent benches.)

Teacher: There are benches around the fountain.

When the student has finished describing the scene, the teacher can repeat the entire description using the rods to recall the various aspects of the scene, or at this point, another student can be called upon to describe the same scene. After this, the students can form small groups, with each group having rods and the task of reconstructing and describing the scene. Notice that what is significant in this activity is that students are describing something unfamiliar to the others. It would not do to hold up a picture that everyone could see and describe it.

5. **Use.** Have students pair off. Each pair of students gets a different picture of a city scene. Only one student in each pair gets to look at it. Identical pictures are placed on a desk at the front of the room. Student A describes the picture to Student B, who has to guess which city it is and then has to run up to the desk at the front of the room and find the picture that Student A has described. Then the roles are reversed. For example:

A: There are skyscrapers. There is a bridge. There is a building next to the water. It is white. It looks like a shell.

B: Is it Sydney?

6. **Form.** Have your students conduct a survey. Shaw and Taylor (1978) suggest one with the signs of the zodiac. After the students have learned each other's astrological signs, they should tally the numbers for each sign and make summary statements. For example:

There are five Capricorns in the class.

There is one Libra.

7. **Use.** Badalamenti and Henner-Stanchina (2007) feature an activity showing a picture of someone's apartment to a class and then asking students to figure out the characteristics of the apartment dweller. They need to make a claim and support it with evidence. For instance, a student might make the statement:

Student: The person is a tennis player.

Another student or teacher could ask:

Teacher: How do you know?

Student: Because there is a tennis racket in the closet.

8. **Use.** Frodesen and Eyring (2007) suggest giving students categories such as:
 - a. Types of books you like best
 - b. Things that you think make a good movie or TV program
 - c. Steps for performing a procedure that you know how to do

Students are asked to write a general statement to introduce the topic and then to write two or three sentences to develop the particular statements. For example:

There are three secrets to making good sushi. First, you need the right kind of rice. Second, it is important to use very fresh fish. Third, you need a sharp knife.

9. **Meaning.** Kathi Bailey (personal communication) suggests that composing a letter or creating a sound file to send home after moving to a new place provides a good context for reinforcing the differences between ambient *it* and existential *there*. If the students are at a low level, the letter could be given to them with just the words *it* and *there* missing.

Dear _____,

It's raining again today, so I'll take the time to write some letters. My new dorm room is okay. It is pretty noisy here. There are four people living in each room.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide an original sentence illustrating each of the following terms. Underline the pertinent words.
 - a. ambient *it*
 - b. referential *it*
 - c. deictic *there*
 - d. existential *there*
 - e. narrative use of *there*
2. Why are the following sentences problematic?
 - a. *It are four o'clock.
 - b. A: Who's going?
B: ?There's Harry and I.
 - c. *There is sunny today.
 - d. ?In the month of February are 28 days.
3. An earlier linguistic approach to the existential *there* was to insert *there* in subject position after the logical subject had been moved to a position after the verb.

A book is on the table. → There is a book on the table.

What are some problems with this analysis?

Test your ability to apply what you know.

4. If your students produce the following, what is it they need to learn in order to conform to the norms of Standard English?
 - a. *Is windy.
 - b. ?A lot of noise is in the street.
 - c. *There are many tourists visit there.
 - d. ?My family has a lot of people.
 - e. *There has been a long time since I have seen you.
5. What differences do the following sentences in each set exhibit?
 - a. (i.) A ball was in the street.
(ii.) In the street was a ball.
(iii.) There was a ball in the street.
 - b. (i.) The time is nine o'clock.
(ii.) It is nine o'clock.
6. One of your ESL/EFL students comes to you and says, "I heard an English speaker say, 'There's usually a lot of empty rooms on the weekend.'" The student asks you why the English speaker didn't say "There are..." How will you answer?

7. Lakoff (1987) notes that there is a lack of symmetry with regard to the following two sets of examples (p. 557):
- a. There's a Japanese executive in the waiting room.
A Japanese executive is in the waiting room.
 - b. There's a Japanese executive in our company.
*A Japanese executive is in our company.
- Can you figure out why the second sentence in (b) is ungrammatical?
8. There are two other uses of there, which we have not specifically covered in this chapter. Look at these two examples. Can you figure out what function they serve or what meaning they convey?
- a. There! My brother is happy at last.
 - b. There's bread, and there's good bread.

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Conjunction

Introduction

Conjunction, or *coordination*, is the process of combining two or more like constituents to produce another larger constituent of the same type. In traditional grammar, this has been called *compounding*. Two clauses or sentences that are combined in writing by means of a comma after the first clause plus a connecting word make a “compound sentence”:

One of us cooks, and the other cleans up.

There are several options for conjunction available in English. One is simply to combine like constituents with a *coordinating conjunction*, such as *and*. For example, two object NPs are conjoined in the following sentence:

We served wine *and* cheese that night.

This is referred to as *simple coordination*. Another option exists when redundancies are eliminated. This option is called *ellipsis*. In the following example, the verb and object in the first VP, *see Orion*, has been omitted (elided) in the second VP, and *too* has been added, preceded by a comma in a written sentence:

We could see Orion in the clear night sky, and they could, too.

A third option exists, which involves use of a *pro-form*, in this example a pronoun:

Annie plays softball, and she plays soccer, too.

Again, in this sentence, constituents in both clauses are identical. The substitution of the pronoun *she* for the repeated subject, *Annie*, eliminates the redundancy. As before, the adverb *too* has been added to mean “also.”

We know of no language that does not have a means for simple coordination, but of course, languages use different grammatical devices for doing so. For instance, Korean has at least two ways of expressing conjunction. The first one is the use of coordinating conjunctions, and the other is the use of conjunctive suffixes (Lee, 2002).

In addition to simple conjunction, there is complex conjunction, consisting of two-part *correlative structures*, here exemplified with *both . . . and*.

Cecilia is *both energetic and ambitious*.

First, we will treat the form of each of these major syntactic options for conjunction, drawing attention to the similarities and differences within each option. Next, we will treat together the meaning and use of the various coordinating conjunctions. Finally, we will consider other matters of use as they pertain to conjunction.

Form: Syntactic Options for Simple and Complex Conjunction

SIMPLE COORDINATION: COMBINING LIKE CONSTITUENTS WITH COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Perhaps the easiest way to begin a discussion of simple conjunction is by mentioning the most common signal used to conjoin: the coordinating conjunction *and*, which seems to mean much the same as the “plus” sign in arithmetic. Consider some of the constituents that *and* may conjoin:

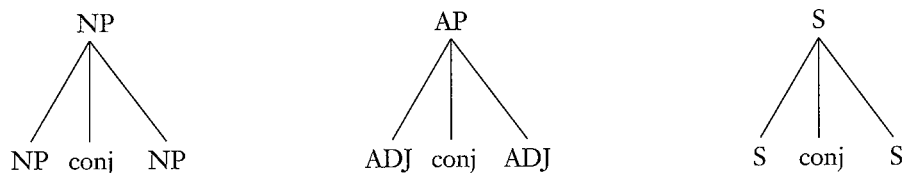
- noun + noun: **[bread] and [butter]**
- NP + NP: **[the bread] and [the butter]**
- adjective + adjective: **[big] and [strong]**
- AP + AP: **[very big] and [extremely strong]**
- verb + verb: **[run] and [hide]**
- PrepP + PrepP: **[over the field] and [into the trees]**
- adverb + adverb: **[rapidly] and [effectively]**
- S + S: **[She got in the pool,] and [she began to swim.]**

English users should have no difficulty constructing sentences in which such sequences naturally occur. For example:

The children *ran and hid*.

The problem was solved *rapidly and effectively*.

Because coordination consists of combining like constituents,¹ we need a simple way of showing how to connect such constituents. This we will do simply with the abbreviation “conj” between them. For example:



Such an analysis assumes that conjoined constituents form a super-constituent of the same category. For example, two conjoined NPs are assumed to be a “super-NP,” with the properties of any other NP. This is a reasonable assumption to make since a conjunction of two NPs seems to behave syntactically exactly as a single, simple NP does: it can figure as subject, direct object, indirect object, object of preposition, and so on:

| | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Subject: | [Martin] bought a stereo. | [Martin and Fred] bought a stereo. |
| Direct object: | Let's get [some coffee]. | Let's get [some coffee and a cake]. |
| Indirect object: | I sent [Russ] a gift. | I sent [Russ and Amy] a gift. |
| Obj of prep: | They worked with [a hammer]. | They worked with [a hammer and a saw]. |

Cases of multiple conjunction with more than two elements can also occur; e.g., with adjectives (*a big, high, fearsome wave*), prepositional phrases (*they ran out of the house, across the*

yard, and into the street), or other constituent type. Multiple coordination often involves an overt conjunction only between the last two conjuncts (although no conjunction is required in the case of prenominal adjectives, as in the first example in this paragraph):

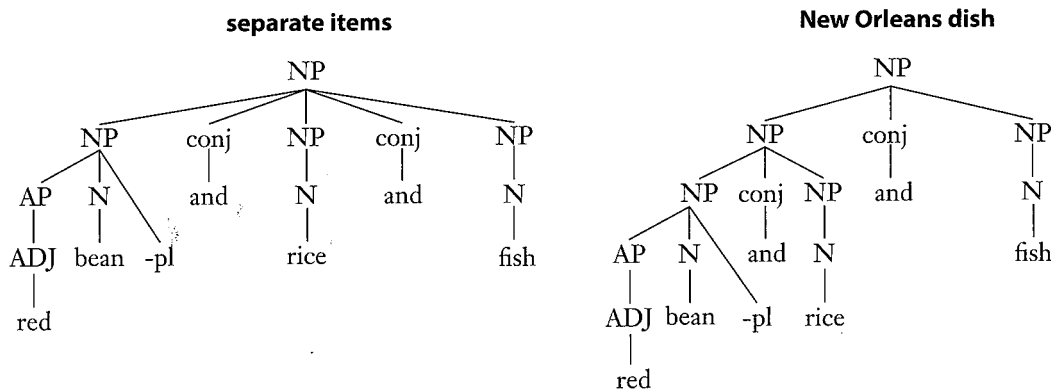
Rising intonation, reflected in writing with commas, appears on all items on a list except the final one, which is marked by falling intonation. An orthographic convention allows an optional comma, called an *Oxford comma*, before the conjunction that precedes the last conjunct.

They had vegetables, rice, and beans.

Finally, we should point out that coordination can occur at different levels of the tree. It is not the case that any sequence of the form “NP and NP and NP” is a case of coordination of three constituents at syntactically equal levels. In fact, certain cases may be ambiguous:

We had red beans and rice and fish.

Here, one may interpret red beans and rice either as separate food items on a plate or as the famous New Orleans dish by that name. The two relevant segments of the tree would be those shown here:



This type of ambiguity is relatively common in everyday speech.

So far, we have implied that conjunction involves the coordination of constituents of the same grammatical category. This is not necessarily what we mean by “like” constituents. Langacker (2012) asserts that what is necessary is the “mental juxtaposition of multiple entities conceived as being analogous” (p. 555). In other words, the conjuncts do not have to be of the same part of speech (although they often are), so long as there is some perceived commonality. Here are some examples from Langacker (2008, p. 408):

He was sad and feeling sorry for himself. (adjective and participial phrase)

She signed the papers reluctantly and with much hesitation. (adverb and prepositional phrase)

According to Langacker (2008), their commonality is due to the adjective and participial phrase in the first sentence ascribing a mental state to *he*. In the second sentence, both adverb and prepositional phrase specify the subject’s attitude in performing the action. Langacker (2008) adds: “Such analogies at the level of conceptual content seem more important than specific grammatical form” (p. 408). For instance, the second sentence in the previous examples would be ungrammatical if constituents with the same grammatical categories were conjoined, but the semantic roles were not parallel:

***She signed the papers with reluctance and a ballpoint pen.**

At the sentence level, too, what is important is that the two clauses that are being conjoined relate to the same topic and form a coherent discourse. In the first sentence here, this coherence is easy to see: two people preparing a meal together, but in the second sentence,

the events do not seem connected. However, they can be related if we think in terms of the life history of a married couple (Langacker, 2012, p. 574):

Ann cooked the salmon, and Bob prepared the vegetables.

Ann was born in Milwaukee, and Bob went to school in Minnesota.

An additional qualification to our discussion so far rests in the distinction Huddleston and Pullum (2002) make between distributive and joint coordination at the subclausal level. What we have illustrated so far is distributive coordination, which is the default type of coordination where the claim is that two “likes” are being combined, e.g.:

Ann and Bob know Greek.

In this case, we understand that Ann knows Greek, and Bob knows Greek, individually. Such is not the case with joint coordination, where the two conjuncts do not apply separately to the individuals:

Ann and Bob are a happy couple.

Notice that *or* works with distributive coordination, but not joint coordination:

Ann or Bob speaks Greek.

***Ann or Bob are a happy couple.**

Also, joint coordination can occur with more than two conjuncts:

Ann, Bob, and Sarah met in college.

Sometimes ambiguity arises when it is unclear whether distributive or joint coordination applies:

Diane and Donald are married. (to each other or each to someone else?)

Simple Coordinating Conjunctions

Other than *and*, traditionally, the simple coordinating conjunctions are *or* and *but*. Others that are sometimes included are *for*, *yet*, *so*, and *nor*. As we saw with *and*, each of these conjoins like constituents:

We will have coffee *or* tea.

He keeps trying, *but* not succeeding.

They closed the theater, *for* there was no other choice.

He is friendly, *yet* vain.

She arrived early at the market, *so* she got the freshest food.

I don't smoke, *nor* do I drink.

Not all of these coordinating conjunctions are as amenable to conjoining the full range of constituents as is *and*. For instance, *for* is used in writing, and somewhat archaically in speech, to coordinate only full clauses, as in:

The flight was diverted to Philadelphia, *for* the weather was bad in Newark.

Yet and *so* are also considered “marginal members of the coordinator category” (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 1319). This is because they function more often as adverb subordinators to subordinate than they do as coordinating conjunctions to coordinate. We discuss subordination further in Chapter 25. Nevertheless, *yet* and *so* sometimes combine with a coordinator (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 1319):

You can look as fit as a fiddle *and yet* feel quite listless.

This may make the task easier *and so* increase self-confidence.

In addition, they can both join non-clause conjuncts, although this is not common:

The hiking trail is difficult, *yet* passable.

The ring is [expensive *so* unaffordable].²

The conjunction *nor* is also a special case. First of all, *nor* connects two negative clauses and, as we will see shortly, often occurs with *neither*. Second, *nor* cannot connect two negative clauses without subject-operator inversion applying to the second clause:

***John will not stay at his job, nor he will leave town permanently.**

John will not stay at his job, nor will he leave town permanently.

If there is no modal verb, *have*, or copula *be* in the second clause, the auxiliary *do* will have to be added as the operator:

John did not stay at his job, nor did he leave town permanently.

But why does inversion occur at all? Notice that it does not occur where *or* is used:

***John will stay at his job, or will he leave town permanently.**

***John stayed at his job, or did he leave town permanently.**

One explanation is historical. The inversion here is a special case, a remnant of a process in older stages of English: whenever something other than the subject occurred in first position in the sentence, a verbal element had to be in second position. In Present-Day English, inversion is required when a negative/restrictive element precedes the subject. More is said about this phenomenon in Chapter 25.

SIMPLE COORDINATION: ELLIPSIS

We noted in the introduction to this chapter that a second syntactic option exists to accomplish simple coordination. Ellipsis, or deletion, occurs frequently in English and will be encountered elsewhere. Here, we view it in the context of coordination.

Uninverted Affirmative Form

Consider the following set of sentences:

a. ?Birds can fly, and I can fly.

b. Birds can fly, and I can fly, too.

c. Birds can fly, and I can, too.

d. *Birds can fly, and I, too.

Sentence (a) is the result of the simple addition of a coordinating conjunction, the process that we have just discussed. Simple addition of a coordinating conjunction in clausal conjunction, when there is redundant material in the second clause as in sentence (a), results in a rather strange sentence. It is improved considerably with the addition of the adverb *too*, placed in the normal adverbial position at the end of the clause, as in (b). The improvement that results from the presence of *too* presumably stems from the consistency between the redundancy of the information in the second clause and the meaning of *too*: “also” or “in addition.” Perhaps an even better solution is to elide or eliminate the redundancy, or part of it, as in (c).

Sentence (d) tells us that if there is a redundant auxiliary verb, it must remain in the clause. But what if the VP is redundant but there is no auxiliary verb? Such is the case with the next set of sentences, where the *be* copula is the main verb, and there is no auxiliary verb:

a. ?She is a citizen, and he is a citizen.

b. She is a citizen, and he is a citizen, too.

c. She is a citizen, and he is, too.

d. *She is a citizen, and he, too.

As we have come to expect with the *be* copula, in the absence of auxiliary verbs, it can function as the operator. Its presence makes (c) grammatical; its absence makes

(d) ungrammatical. Finally, as we have also come to expect, when there is no other operator, the *do* verb serves this function:

- a. ?She believes the reports, and I believe the reports.
- b. She believes the reports, and I believe the reports, too.
- c. She believes the reports, and I do, too.
- d. *She believes the reports, and I, too.

You can see that it does not seem to matter how much material is elided in the VP:

She believes [the reports that the politician was lying about his involvement with space aliens during his first term of office], and I do, too.

So long as the material deleted is identical to that which already appears in the first clause, no meaning is lost in the second, elliptical clause.

Inverted Affirmative Form

Now let us look at the following examples:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Birds can fly, and so can I. | *Birds can fly, and I can so. |
| She has left the country, and so have I. | *She has left the country, and I have so. |
| She is a citizen, and so is he. | *She is a citizen, and he is so. |
| She believes the reports, and so do I. | *She believes the reports, and I do so. |

Here, the syntax looks similar to the example given earlier with *nor*—that is, sentences such as *John did not stay at his job, nor did he leave town permanently*, where subject-operator inversion occurs—with the difference that in these four cases, the sentences are affirmative rather than negative. We will simply assume that *so* is an adverb like *too*. *So* has a special requirement, however. It must be in clause-initial position, thus triggering subject-operator inversion.³

Uninverted and Inverted Negative Forms

The negative counterparts of these sentences are:

- a. **Turkeys can't fly, and I can't fly either.**
- b. **Turkeys can't fly, and I can't either.**
- c. **Turkeys can't fly, and neither can I.**

- a. **She hasn't left, and I haven't left either.**
- b. **She hasn't left, and I haven't either.**
- c. **She hasn't left, and neither have I.**

- a. **She doesn't believe the reports, and I don't believe them either.**
- b. **She doesn't believe the reports, and I don't either.**
- c. **She doesn't believe the reports, and neither do I.**

In the (a) sentences, *either* functions in a conjoined negative sentence as an adverb, just as *so* does in an affirmative compound sentence. The (b) sentences result from eliding the redundancy in the repeated VP. In all the (c) sentences, it can be seen that *neither* is a combination of *not* + *either*. Then, because *neither* is in a position before the subject in the second clause, subject-operator inversion takes place.

One last brief alternative with *too/so/either/neither* ellipsis concerns the clipped forms, used as rejoinders. For example:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| A: I play tennis. | B: Me, too! |
| A: I don't play squash. | B: Me (n)either. |

As is well known, these forms are often frowned on by prescriptive grammarians. However, they are commonly used. Moreover, what is interesting about them is the fact that the pronouns, which in the other elliptical forms appear in subject form, are here in object form. We do not hear

***I too.**

***I (n)either.**

In addition, only the uninverted forms may appear in this way. We do not hear

***So me.**

***(N)either me.**

Gapping

An additional type of ellipsis, called *gapping*, occurs medially in conjoined structures. Gapping may occur provided that the conjoined sentences have (a) nonidentical subjects and (b) at least one nonidentical predicate constituent apart from the verb. Here are some examples:

John trimmed the tree, and Mary the hedge.

My uncle works in Ann Arbor, and my aunt in Detroit.

The wind was brisk, the sun bright, and the ocean calm.

The major difference between simple ellipsis and gapping is that with gapping the deleted part of the sentence lies in the middle rather than at the end of the second clause.

Another type of reduction from conjoined clauses, where the segments cannot be analyzed as complete, would seem to be necessary in cases like

Ann came with, and Bob without, a date.

By juxtaposing the contrasting elements, their parallelism is highlighted. “And while processing of the baseline clause is *interrupted*, it is not *disrupted*. Our mental agility is such that we can usually resume and complete it while preserving its structural integrity” (Langacker, 2012, p. 595).

SIMPLE COORDINATION: PRO-FORMS

In addition to simple coordination and ellipsis, another syntactic option exists for conjoining constituents in a sentence. Like ellipsis, it also helps in avoiding redundancy. This is the possibility of substituting a pro-form for a redundant constituent. In fact, pro-forms often occur in tandem with ellipsis. We could, for instance, say that an operator, be it an auxiliary verb, the copula *be*, or *do*, is really a pro-verb or, rather, a substitute for the entire VP. For example:

Glenn likes to play tennis, and Elaine does, too. (i.e., *does* = likes to play tennis)

There are some times, however, that pro-forms are used in compound sentences without ellipsis. This is the case with pronouns and substitute words:

She has left the country, and I have left *it*, too.

She believes the reports, and I believe *them*, too.

She is a citizen, and he is *one*, too.

and also pro-adverbs:

Carl first voted in the 2008 presidential election, and Bev first voted *then*, too.

He graduated from the University of Wisconsin, and she graduated from *there*, too.

Sentences with Respectively

We conclude this section on simple conjunction with mention of the adverb *respectively*. It seems again that few other languages have an equivalent word; it is used only where it is needed for the purpose of resolving interpretation problems. For example, in the sentence

Gunther bought a Honda, and Takako bought a Volkswagen.

there is no doubt as to who bought which car. However, in the sentence

Gunther and Takako bought a Honda and a Volkswagen.

it is less clear whether each person bought one or more cars individually or whether the two cars were purchased jointly by Gunther and Takako. Although the sentence seems fully grammatical, an interpretation problem may arise—a problem that the addition of the adverb *respectively* can solve because it clarifies that Gunther bought the Honda and Takako bought the Volkswagen:

Gunther and Takako bought a Honda and a Volkswagen, respectively.

Respectively is a word that is capable of appearing in different structural positions. The sentence below is synonymous with the one above:

Gunther and Takako, respectively, bought a Honda and a Volkswagen.

While *respectively* serves mainly to disambiguate, correlatives serve both to disambiguate and to emphasize as well. We turn to correlative conjunction next.

COMPLEX COORDINATION: CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTION

Though the syntax of simple coordination is not an area of English grammar that causes many ESL/EFL learning problems, students often have difficulties with complex coordination—two-part correlative constructions where one part precedes the first conjunct and the other correlates with and precedes the second. The correlative conjunctions include *both . . . and*, *either . . . or*, and *neither . . . nor*. An additional correlative conjunction pair, *not only . . . but also*, will be taken up in the exercises. ESL/EFL students, unfamiliar with two-part conjunctions in their own language, may experience cross-linguistic influence and leave out one member of the pair.

Both . . . And

The correlative conjunction pair *both . . . and* shows a wide range of possibilities available for constituent coordination.⁴ The correlative elements appear just prior to the coordinated constituents:

Both [Mary] and [John] arrived early.

Mary is both [energetic] and [ambitious].

John wants both [to stay at his job] and [to leave town permanently].

Almost any pair of constituents can be joined by *both . . . and*, with the exception of full-sentence coordination—that is, with clausal conjunction where some kind of ellipsis is necessary:

***Both [John wants to stay at his job] and [he wants to leave town permanently].**

However, *both* does not always occur directly before the first conjunct. Note the following sentences with their respective stylistic variants:

Both [John] and [Mary] arrived early. = [John] and [Mary] both arrived early.

Mary is both [energetic] and [ambitious]. = Mary is [energetic] and [ambitious] both.

John wants both to [stay at his job] and to [leave town permanently]. = John both wants [to stay at his job] and [to leave town permanently].

In the second versions of these sentences, the first correlative does not occur immediately before a constituent type identical to the one before which the second occurs.

Either . . . Or *and* Neither . . . Nor

Correlatives with *either . . . or* and *neither . . . nor* are parallel to *both . . . and* in that they generally place the conjunctive elements directly before the options mentioned:

Either [Mary] or [John] arrived early.

Neither [Mary] nor [John] arrived early.

Mary is either [energetic] or [ambitious].

Mary is neither [energetic] nor [ambitious].

However, there are variants in which the first correlative element appears in a different position:

John wants either to [stay at his job] or [leave town permanently].

John wants neither to [stay at his job] nor [leave town permanently].

John either wants [to stay at his job] or [to leave town permanently].

John neither wants [to stay at his job] nor [to leave town permanently].

It is worth noting that *either . . . or* is different from *neither . . . nor* and *both . . . and* in that correlative conjunction is not only possible at the subclausal level, but also at the clausal level:

Either he does what is expected of him, or he'll lose his job.

We have already discussed form issues having to do with the correlatives and subject-verb agreement (see Chapter 4), so for now, we turn to fully exploring the areas of meaning and use.

The Meaning and Use of Conjunctions

Conjunctions allow speakers to combine two or more like elements. Their use helps to make writing, especially, less choppy and redundant. Not using them leads to *run-on* sentences:

***The moon is full that explains their crazy behavior.**

The moon is full, so that explains their crazy behavior.

Sometimes a comma is used with a run-on sentence. When such is the case, it is called a *comma splice* by prescriptive grammarians:

***The moon is full, that explains their crazy behavior.**

Of course, coordinating conjunctions can also be overused:

?The moon is full, so that explains their crazy behavior and many other things, such as the fall in the stock market and the rising price of butter, and others.

Avoiding run-on sentences and comma splices is something all writers need to learn.

Turning now to their meaning, a straightforward account for coordinating conjunctions might look like this:

| <i>Conjunction</i> | <i>Meaning</i> | <i>Example</i> |
|--------------------|---|---|
| and | plus | Lloyd <i>and</i> Mark are going into business together. |
| but | shows contrast | Lloyd is hard-working, <i>but</i> Mark is lazy. |
| yet | but at the same time | Mark is lazy, <i>yet</i> well intentioned. |
| so | therefore | Neither man had much money, <i>so</i> they decided to collaborate. ⁵ |
| for | because | I hope they succeed, <i>for</i> this has been a dream come true for both men. |
| or | one or the other of two or more alternatives is true | They are determined to make it <i>or</i> to go bankrupt in the process. |
| nor | conjoins two negative sentences, both of which are true | Lloyd doesn't give up easily, <i>nor</i> does Mark. |

While this account may well be satisfactory for beginning ESL/EFL students, its straightforwardness is deceptive. The question of what conjunctions “mean” is a difficult area for linguists. It has been explored on the one hand by logicians and on the other by researchers in pragmatics; the two groups have in the past come to different conclusions, with the former generally favoring what Posner (1980) calls a “meaning-minimal” account and the latter a “meaning-maximal” account. Let us take a brief look at the two views and, in the process, attempt to characterize the nature of the conjunction *and*. We then look at *but*, *yet*, *or*, and *so*. We do not discuss *for* here because as we mentioned, the use of *for* as a coordinating conjunction is somewhat archaic. We also do not deal with *nor* further here, as it occurs much more frequently with its correlative counterpart *neither*, which we address later in this chapter. It is important to understand that linguists by no means agree over what constitutes “semantic meaning” and what constitutes “pragmatic meaning” in this area of language.

AND

The meaning of the word *and* has inspired lively debate. Here, we sketch some of the ways the question has been approached.

And as a Logical Operator

Most linguists agree that conjunctions have certain logical properties. Branches of linguistics that are oriented toward mathematically formal description, such as logical semantics, speak of the truth-conditional properties of connective elements. The general idea is that the truth of the statement

Stu is a cook, and Fred is a server.

is a function of the truth of each individual conjunct. So long as each conjunct is true, then the entire conjoined statement is true; if one conjunct is false, the statement is false. Since this truth-conditional meaning seems to be constant across all uses of *and*, that is often thought to be its central, prototypical, or essential meaning.

As it turns out, *and* seems to convey many additional meanings in English, not all of which are conveyed by its roughly equivalent word in other languages. If *and* is really only a logical operator, it ought to be possible to reverse all clauses that are conjoined by *and* without any loss of meaning—after all, in logic and mathematics ($X + Y$) is equivalent to ($Y + X$). And, indeed, it does not seem to matter how we order the two major parts of the sentence here:

Tokyo is the capital of Japan, and Paris is the capital of France.

Paris is the capital of France, and Tokyo is the capital of Japan.

However, once we get beyond such symmetric sentences to asymmetric ones, which are likely to be uttered more frequently, problems arise:

Fred fell down, and he hurt his foot badly.

?Fred hurt his foot badly, and he fell down.

The problem in the second sentence does not lie in the question of whether *and* is truth-conditional or not: after all, it is true that if Fred fell down and hurt his foot, then Fred did hurt his foot, and he did fall down. The problem is that the hearer concludes in the first case that Fred's hurting his foot was a result of his having fallen. If the order of clauses is reversed, as in the second example, we do not come to that conclusion; if anything, we might conclude the opposite: that his falling was the result of his foot injury, which is also possible, but which indicates a different sequence. What is responsible for these different interpretations?

And as a Marker of Many Meanings

One solution is to take the “meaning-maximal” route and say that *and* has two meanings—one simply the truth-conditional meaning of logic, and the other a richer meaning that includes the idea of “as a result.” There would therefore be ambiguity in the word *and*; as in other cases of lexical ambiguity, the listener or reader simply has to figure out from the context of the utterance whether one meaning or the other is intended (as happens when one says, “I went to the bank”—have we been talking about money, or are we now in the middle of a fishing trip?). Yet this solution has its own problems. As Posner (1980) shows, the same sort of juxtaposition of sentences with *and* can yield many additional readings (p. 186):

a. Annie is in the kitchen, and she is making doughnuts. (*and there ...*)

b. Annie fell into a deep sleep, and her facial color returned. (*and during this time ...*)

c. The window was open, and there was a draft. (*and coming from it ...*)

d. Peter married Annie, and she had a baby. (*and after that ...*)

e. Paul pounded on the stone, and he shattered it. (*and thereby ...*)

f. Give me your picture, and I'll give you mine. (*If you give me your picture, I'll give you mine.*)

The number of possible senses of *and* grows with such a list, which may still be incomplete. For example, in a sentence like *I gave them everything they wanted, and they still didn't thank me*, *and* could be replaced by *but*. In principle, the meanings of *and* shade into one another in such a way that they could become too numerous to list; this is not a problem that we encounter with ordinary lexical ambiguity. When we say “bank,” we might mean a place to deposit our money or a place from which to fish, but we are certainly not tempted to interpret the word as some combination of these two meanings—say, as a safety deposit box alongside a river.

And as an Inferential Connective

This sort of problem has led those who work in the field of pragmatics and who look for general principles of language use to the conclusion that these so-called meanings of *and*

are actually not meanings at all, but aspects of use—where *use* means that the context of the utterance determines exactly how the word will be interpreted. Blakemore (1992) argues that when we use the conjunction *and*, we may intend to draw the listener’s/reader’s attention to something over and above what is expressed by the individual conjuncts; the use of *and* is motivated, in other words, by the desire to have the listener/reader draw an inferential connection, one that is not stated but implied. If we are simply making a grocery list, there is no mystery to the use of *and* to connect items in a parallel way. However, if someone utters, *John fell down and hurt his knee*, the listener/reader is implicitly being invited to seek some other relevant connection between the conjuncts. Given what we know about the possible effects of a fall upon the human body, we are led to the most likely connection—a causal one. Since we assume that the speaker/writer is equally aware of the possible connection, we will feel almost betrayed in the event that no such connection was actually intended—in the case that, for instance, John did fall down but had actually hurt his knee from some other cause prior to or later than that.

And as a Marker of Speaker Continuation

Another much different presentation of *and* by Schiffrin (1987) examines its use in conversational discourse beyond the ideational, or content, level. She calls it a mark of “speaker-continuation,” with which a speaker signals that the discourse to follow is in some way connected with what has come before. The connection may be a way to take back a conversational turn that has been interrupted by someone else, thereby indicating that the original speaker has not finished. A speaker who wishes to continue a monologue, but needs to catch his or her breath, does well, then, to signal this wish by ending with an uttered *and* just prior to the pause. This use of *and* goes beyond the usual ideational conjunctive uses and places it into the category of what have come to be known as *discourse markers*—a category that contains words like *oh* and *well*, expressions that cannot well be defined without reference to a speaker’s role in conversation at a given moment. Discourse markers certainly should have a role in the teaching of oral communication skills.

Regarding oral communication, Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) note that “turn-initial coordinators are considerably more common in conversation than sentence-initial coordinators in the written registers” (p. 83). This may be due to the prescription to avoid beginning written sentences with a conjunction. However, Dorgeloh (2004) argues that this dispreference for sentence-initial connectors is not a modern phenomenon and can be traced to earlier stages in the evolution of English. Nevertheless, the use of sentence-initial conjunctions, even *and*, is undeniably increasing these days.

As was the case with the syntax of simple conjunction, the meaning and use of *and* are not especially problematical aspects of English for ESL/EFL students. This is so despite the fact that although most languages may have a word that is translatable as *and*, this word may not be as free in its syntactic occurrence or potential interpretations as is the English word. Mandarin Chinese, for example, may coordinate NPs with the word *han*, but sentences are coordinated by other words such as *er* or *che*.⁶ At least one of these would fit into most of the slots filled by *and* in Posner’s (1980) example sentences, but would make no sense at all in the warning, *Do that, and I’ll hit you!* A comparative study of distribution will show that in general, English is quite broad with respect to the contexts in which *and* may be used; most ESL/EFL students may not make full use of the options available to them.

BUT AND YET

But is often described as logically equivalent to *and*. That is, if the sentence “It is raining, but I am happy” is true, it is also true that it is raining and I am happy. However, *but* clearly means more than this, and this “more” is generally said to be a contrast of some sort.⁷ *But* signals two types of contrast, while the conjunction *yet* is generally limited to a single type of contrast.

But/Yet in Denials of Expectations

One type of contrast is usually called *denial-of-expectation*. This use, often called *adversative*, has to do with the violation of reasonable expectations: what is expected after a reading of the first conjunct turns out not to be true from a reading of the second. Some examples are the following:

He is assertive but/yet introverted.

They tried for three hours to steer the boat from the storm, but/yet the boat sank.

They’ve had a terrible time up to now, but/yet they’ll probably succeed in the end.

She told us that Athens was in this direction, but/yet she’s mistaken.

As such examples show, *but/yet* may be used where the violation of expectations is not especially strong; in the last example, it is not necessary that we expect the directions that people give to be correct all the time. However, we do tend to trust others’ directions, and we find our trust misplaced if the directions are faulty; so the issue of expectation probably plays a part in the choice of conjunction.

But as a Marker of Semantic Contrast

The other major use of *but* involves a real semantic contrast, one in which exactly two entities or qualities are set adjacent to each other in order to focus on one or more semantic differences in them. Most often they may involve polar opposition, but the following examples show that they need not do so:

Winter is warm in Miami but cold in Moscow.

Heide likes skiing, but her sister prefers tennis.

Nimbus clouds threaten rain, but cirrus clouds do not.

She enjoys an occasional visit to the desert, but he wants to relocate there.

Although it is possible to imagine circumstances in which some of these sequences might involve denials of expectation (which then also would permit *yet*), in general, no real denials of expectations need be present here; for instance, we cannot expect or predict anything at all about Moscow weather from information about Miami weather. Sometimes, the semantic contrast is not exhibited in a specific pair of words like *warm/cold* or a clear negation word, but rather in an implied ideational contrast, such as that in the final example between *occasional visit* (“stay briefly from time to time”) and *relocate* (“stay a long time”).

But as a Marker of Speaker-Return

There seems to be a clearly distinct third way in which *but* is used in discourse, especially conversational discourse, one that has been described by Schiffrin (1987). When seen as a discourse marker, *but* can be, among other things, a sign of speaker-return: when one party to a conversation has strayed for some reason from the main point of a monologue, *but* (or *anyway*, or *but anyway*, or *but, as I was saying*) can be used to mark the attempt to recover the lost point. This use of *but* differs greatly from the two ideational uses.

As was true with *and*, languages other than English tend to have some sort of expression like *but* to mark contrast; ESL/EFL students do not seem to experience great difficulties

with the use of *but*. Again, these other languages may have two or more noninterchangeable words that cover the uses of the English word. Modern Hebrew distributes these uses across two words, *aval* and *ela*. One Mandarin Chinese equivalent of *but*, the expression *tan-she*, is actually a correlative with which one can express denial of expectations, but not semantic contrast, which can be marked by another word, *er*.⁸ German has one word, *aber*, which covers both denial and contrast except in the case of explicit contradictions, as in *This is not a rose but a geranium*, in which case the word *sondern* is used. As with *and*, the task of the student learning English in such cases, where many native-language words coalesce into one, seems much simpler than that of the English-speaking student learning one of these languages, in which he or she might tend to generalize just one of the forms to inappropriate cases.

OR

Arguments over the true meaning of *or* are parallel to those we summarized previously concerning *and*. In presenting them, we will cover the major uses of this conjunction.

Inclusive Or

The meaning of the conjunction *or* has been characterized by logically oriented linguists in a truth-conditional way: any sentence “*X or Y*” is true so long as one of its conjuncts is true. If both of the conjuncts are false, then the statement is false; if both are true, the statement is true. Thus if someone says,

We’ll serve carrots or (we’ll serve) peas.

without a specific commitment to doing only one of these things, one might normally say that the conditions of the statement are fulfilled so long as we do one or both of these things; it is unlikely that if we serve both carrots and peas, someone would accuse us of having spoken falsely. Logic and reality seem to work in parallel ways here.

Exclusive Or

However, it is clear that when we use *or*, we do not always intend it in this way. In some cases, we clearly intend to convey the exclusive rather than the inclusive meaning. Suppose that during the sale of an automobile, the salesperson says,

You can pay us ten thousand dollars in cash, or you can give us a money order for that amount.

In this case, the buyer clearly expects that the seller intends the exclusive reading to hold; neither buyer nor seller would consider the inclusive reading as even a remote possibility. In other cases, it seems that real-world conditions dictate an exclusive reading regardless of our intentions, as in the case of the sentence

Right now our relatives are in London, or (they are) in Paris.

In others, logic dictates such a reading, as in

It is snowing outside, or it is not snowing outside.

Logicians might then insist, as those in Gamut (1991) do, that such problems are matters of context, not of word meaning: whatever the world is like, it still holds that the semantic meaning of simple *or* is the logical one. The conjoined sentence *Right now we are in London, or we are in Paris* is true so long as at least one of its conjuncts is true. The fact that in this case, both of its conjuncts cannot be true at the same time is a problem for the world, not for logic, and so long as we are in one of the two cities at the time of the utterance, the sentence is true and the meaning of *or* remains constant.

We thus seem to have a problem similar to that for *and*, where semantic meaning and pragmatic meaning are confounded. Since ambiguities can arise through mismatched intentions, English does have a correlative form *either . . . or*, which seems, for most speakers, to have the exclusive reading. The sequences

- a. either *X* or *Y* but not both . . . (= exclusive)
- b. either *X* or *Y* or both . . . (= inclusive)
- c. *X* and/or *Y* . . . (= inclusive or exclusive)

serve the same purpose in an even more emphatic way.

Or as a Warning

Or may have additional senses that go beyond the inclusive-exclusive distinction. One involves an imperative, or quasi-warning, sentence followed by a statement of consequence:

Stop that loud music, or I will call the police.

Give me your overdue assignment right now, or I will lower your grade.

You have to fix the car, or we can't go on our trip.

In such cases, *or* may be paraphrased lexically as *otherwise*. These sentences may also be naturally paraphrased syntactically with such conditional structures as

If you do not stop that loud music, (then) I will call the police.

If you do not give me the assignment, (then) I will lower your grade.

If you do not fix the car, (then) we can't go on our trip.

Once again, given a more fully explicated form of the imperatives (as in, *Either you will stop that loud music, or I will call the police.*), a logician would likely hold *or* to the constant semantic meaning while leaving the pragmatics to others.

Or in Paraphrases

A further use of *or* is somewhat more puzzling:

This is a matsutake, or pine mushroom.

The boards have to be mitered, or cut at an angle.

Or is frequently used in this way at the phrasal level in definitions, appositives, or paraphrases. At first glance, the situation seems complementary to that of *It is snowing, or it is not snowing* as far as logic is concerned. While the reading of *or* in that sentence is necessarily exclusive, in these two sentences, the reading seems necessarily inclusive: we cannot have a matsutake without also having an exotic mushroom called by the common English name "pine mushroom." (This kind of all-inclusion is, after all, part of what makes a good definition.) Yet the logician could still tell us that the usual definition of *or* holds true. Pragmatically, there seems to be something metalinguistic happening in such sequences. In the first part of each sentence, in uttering the words *matsutake* or *mitered*, we may seem to be referring to things (objects or events) in the world. In the second part, however, we retroactively call attention to those words as *words*, rather than as representations of objects or events. This metalinguistic intention shows up in spoken discourse by means of a special emphatic stress on the word to be defined or paraphrased; it shows up in written discourse by means of italics or quotation marks. Thus, the speaker seems to be saying,

You can refer to this object as a "matsutake" or as a "pine mushroom."

The action that must be performed on the boards can be called either "mitering" or "cutting at an angle."

Since there is a possibility here of choosing one option, the other option, or both, the logician's definition still seems to hold true.

Or as a Self-Correction Device

At the clausal level, this metalinguistic version of *or* shows up in what often appear as self-corrections when a speaker has not expressed himself or herself satisfactorily. For example:

We have to help the children. Or, more precisely, we have to help them to help themselves.

You are a joy to be around. Or, to put it another way, I love you.

Here, the *or* may be interpreted in reference to the prior statement itself in such a way as to suggest, “What I intended by the first sentence was . . .”

These uses of *or* do not necessarily match the full range of uses of any single word in other languages. Although the correspondence between English *or* and German *oder* is rather neat, Mandarin Chinese is quite different: Mandarin speakers use the expression *buozhe* for *yes/no* questions, while the expression *hai she* is used for alternative questions (see Chapter 14); the two are not interchangeable. In the case of the imperative-warning use of *or*, only the expression *foze* (i.e., “otherwise”) is available. None of these three may be used to express metalinguistic-paraphrase *or*, which is typically marked with an expression that we can translate as “that is to say”; thus, in this kind of metalinguistic paraphrase, the English use may seem quite bizarre to Chinese learners.

so

The conjunction *so*⁹ might be seen essentially as a marker that relates causes to results, as in

The rope broke, so the box fell down.

She has a cold, so she won't be coming with us today.

However, Blakemore (1988) calls *so* more generally an inferential marker—that is, a conjunction that relates an inference in the second clause to a proposition in the first. (Since propositions are typically rendered in sentence form, we may have an explanation for why *so* finds practically no use as a phrasal conjunction.) For Blakemore (1988), the causal reading is what she calls an “enriched” interpretation. It is possible to use *so* where no expression of cause is desired, but where logical inferences are strong, as in examples like the following:

There's five dollars in my wallet, so I didn't spend all my money, then.

The car's in the garage, so Zahra must be here.

This use of *so* can be used across interlocutors, where one supplies the initial proposition and the other supplies the inference:

A: The Acme Corporation has just gone out of business.

B: So we've lost our investment.

So may even be used, as Blakemore (1988) points out, where no prior utterance at all has occurred: Suppose that someone is wondering who has taken a freshly made cake and then sees the family dog with frosting on its face. A likely reaction would be to say, *So YOU ate it!* If the baker of the cake had not already noticed that the cake was missing (and hence not had at least the proposition, *The cake is missing*, already in mind), the baker could not, on seeing the dog's face, attach *so* to the exclamation. What unifies all of these uses of *so* is that while logical inferences may or may not always be present, the listener/reader will always be cued to the construction of some kind of inference as his or her main task.

Moving beyond its role as a simple coordinator to its use as a discourse marker, Schiffrin (1987) illustrates situations in which a speaker marks a transition in the conversation by the

use of *so*, thereby offering the listener the chance to become a speaker and either carry the topic further or change topics. One of the speakers whom she recorded is quoted as saying,

“We’re considered the . . . more or less . . . the oppressors. So ah . . . take it from there.”

Often, when a conversation seems played out, an interlocutor will utter *so* . . . , often with fading intonation, apparently as a signal that the discussion agenda is being opened or, perhaps, that the conversation is nearing an end. It is worth investigating to what extent this conversational device can be seen as an extension of the ideational one described by Blakemore (1988).

Buyse (2012) sums up investigations on the use of *so* by learners [e.g., Müller’s (2005) and Hellermann and Vergun’s (2007)] in this way:

In sum, the discourse marker *so* appears in the existing literature as a “resultative” or “inferential” marker that has the ability to fulfil a multitude of (predominantly) discourse-structuring functions. As such it is frequent in native and learner language, but it is still more common in the former than in the latter. (p. 1766)

From 40 interviews with advanced English learners in Belgium, Buyse (2012) himself identifies ten functions of *so*, which he classifies according to Halliday’s three functional relationships (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) and which he then compares to a comparable corpus of interviews with English speakers.

| DISCOURSE MARKER FUNCTIONS OF SO | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Type of relation | Discourse marker function |
| Ideational | Indicate a result |
| Interpersonal | Draw a conclusion Prompt Hold the floor |
| Textual | Introduce a summary Introduce a section of the discourse Indicate a shift back to a higher unit of the discourse Introduce elaboration Mark self-correction |

Buyse (2012) found that advanced learners of English used *so* for all these functions; however, in contrast to previous research, he reports that the learners used them twice as often as the English speakers. Further, even this list of ten functions is not comprehensive. As Buyse observes, it leaves out *so* as an adverb of degree or manner (e.g., *She was so happy.*), *so* marking “purpose” (e.g., *He left early so as to avoid the rush-hour traffic.*), as a part of fixed phrases (e.g., *and so on*) and as a pro-form (e.g., *I think so.*).

AND/OR

One final comment on the meanings of conjunctions has to do with the alternation between *and* and *or* in conjoined constructions in affirmative and negative statements, respectively. Consider the following sets:

- a. **They have a house and a car.**
- b. **They don’t have a house and a car.**
- c. **They don’t have a house or a car.**

Most speakers of English will tend to find the proper negation of the proposition expressed in (a) to be (c), not (b), although negation seems to have operated on (b) in the normal way.

What sentence (c) expresses is:

It is not true that they have a house. It is also not true that they have a car.

In contrast to that, the typical logical interpretation of the (b) sentence is:

It is not true that they have both a house and a car.

It is true that they have either a house or a car.

We find a parallel in a structure already presented in Chapter 10: the alternation between *some* and *any*. Recall that the standard negation of

She has some books.

is the sentence:

She doesn't have any books.

Recall, too, that the sentence

She doesn't have some books.

admits the following interpretation:

There are some books that she doesn't have.

implying that there are some books that she does have. As is true with the *some/any* distinction, the *and/or* alternation is likely to be the source of learner difficulty; the two structures may even merit treatment together in class.

OTHER ISSUES OF USE WITH CONJUNCTION

Similarities and Differences between Structures with Too/Either and So/Neither

In many English grammar textbooks, the affirmative expressions *I do too* and *so do I* and the negative expressions *I don't either* and *neither do I* are presented as synonymous forms that can be freely substituted one for the other.

| | <i>Uninverted</i> | <i>Inverted</i> |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Affirmative</i> | I do too | so do I |
| <i>Negative</i> | I don't either | neither do I |

They are similar in that the words *too* and *so* serve to provide new information in affirmative statements, while cueing the listener/reader that identical components of the first clause may need to be inferred to fill in syntactic gaps and flesh out the full meaning. The words *either* and *neither* serve the same purpose for negative statements. All four phrases can also be seen as devices to shortcut the repetition of sentence elements primarily in the expression of agreement between interlocutors.

We earlier presented *too* as similar to *so*, and *not...either* as similar to *neither*, differing only in their relative syntactic positions and in the fact that subject-operator inversion occurs when *so* or *neither* precedes the subject. In fact, they often seem interchangeable, but they are not equivalent in all contexts, since the *too*-form permits the addition of new information within the predicate, while the *so*-form does not. For example:

Matt plays second base, and he pitches, too.

***Matt plays second base, and so does he pitch.**

You can fish from the bridge, and you can dive from it, too.

***You can fish from the bridge, and so can you dive from it.**

In contrast, the corresponding forms with *not...either/neither* are both possible, although the second of these tends to sound somewhat awkward:

I don't like broccoli, and I don't like squash either.

?I don't like broccoli, and neither do I like squash.

You can't fish from this bridge, and you can't dive from it either.

?You can't fish from this bridge, and neither can you dive from it.

When one wants to add new information in subject position, however, all these forms are suitable:

Matt plays second base, and so does Lou.

Matt plays second base, and Lou does, too.

I don't like broccoli, and neither do you.

I don't like broccoli, and you don't either.

When new information is added both to the subject and the predicate position, however, or when multiple pieces of information are added to the predicate, speakers express reservations about the appropriateness of any of these forms:

?I play first base, and my sister pitches, too.

?I don't play first base, and my sister doesn't pitch either.

?You can fish from this bridge, and you can dive from that one, too.

?You can't fish from this bridge, and you can't dive from that one either.

However, Celce-Murcia (1980) provides evidence from discourse analysis that such sentences occasionally occur in informal conversations.

A second difference worth pointing out is that when these forms are used as rejoinders, only the uninverted forms may be shortened and used without an auxiliary verb. Also, when these forms are shortened, any subject pronoun involved must be changed to an object form:

A: I'm sorry that Detroit lost the World Series in 2012.

B: So am I. / I am, too. / Me, too!

A: I wasn't paying attention.

B: Neither was I. / I wasn't either. / Me neither.

These rejoinder forms, in addition to being of a highly informal register, seem almost completely restricted in use to the expression of personal agreement between interlocutors. Evidence for this observation lies in the fact that only the first person pronoun *me* regularly appears in this structure:

A: She wants to wear a sweatshirt today.

B: So does he. / He does, too. / ?Him too.

A: I don't want to stand in line all day.

B: Neither do they. / They don't either. / ?Them neither.

In other words, one cannot talk about other people's agreement with these forms. Nor are they regularly used with the first person pronoun in a monologue:

?She wants to go, and me, too.

?She doesn't want to go, and me neither.

Therefore, *me too* and *me (n)either* seem tied to a very specific and restricted discourse function.

By using a questionnaire, Shayne (1975) was successful in isolating a third context where the uninverted forms were strongly preferred over the inverted forms. In this case, it was

with subordination rather than coordination (see Chapter 26). Shayne found that uninverted forms were favored where the “tag” is preceded by an adverb subordinator such as *because*, *since*, *although*, or *in spite of the fact*. For example:

Macy’s offers a lot of good buys, although

a. so does Gimbel’s.

b. Gimbel’s does, too. (strongly preferred)

c. no preference

You have seen several contexts so far where the uninverted forms were necessary or were preferred over the inverted forms. The opposite also occurs. In a usage study, Celce-Murcia (1980) showed that native speakers preferred the inverted forms over the uninverted forms in those cases where an insult was intended. (The numbers in parentheses refer to the number of respondents completing a questionnaire who preferred a given form.) For example:

You’re a rotten egg and

(74) **a. so is your father.**

(31) **b. your father is, too.**

(8) **c.** no preference

The uninverted forms are more frequent and versatile overall than the inverted forms; however, there are important discourse differences. While this area of grammar could stand more investigation, it is an oversimplification to treat the two affirmative (and two negative) forms as mere paraphrases of each other.

Coordinate Clauses without Conjunctions

Coordination, or conjunction, presumably exists as a syntactic operation to ease language processing. In many cases, redundancy is eliminated and more efficient communication is achieved. In addition, conjunction serves to clarify the relationship between sentences. When conjunctions are not used, the clause sequence may be ambiguous:

It was bitter cold. It was snowing.

The most likely interpretation of the relationship between these two sentences might be an additive one:

It was bitter cold and snowing.

Without conjunctions, however, we have no way of telling the relationship from the syntactic evidence. People who live in snowy climates, for example, know that bitter cold days and nights are often the clearest—that is, it doesn’t often snow when it is bitter cold. Therefore, we could give another interpretation to this pair of sentences:

It was bitter cold, yet snowing.

Many other interpretations are possible. The point is that conjunctions serve to disambiguate the relationship between sentences and thus clarify intended meaning. In Chapter 26, we will consider logical connectors, where this is even more the case.

Conclusion

Conjunction presumably exists to help speakers and writers avoid the repetition of identical constituents and ambiguity. We have seen that this can be done by adding coordinating conjunctions and using ellipses and pro-forms. Correlative conjunctions can serve this same purpose while emphasizing the coordination of grammatically similar constituents.

One of the fascinating aspects of conjunctions is the chameleonlike way in which they may behave as simple logical operators at one extreme, and as discourse markers, serving a connective function in discourse, at the other. Many of the uses of conjunctions, particularly conversational ones, fall into this latter type. For ESL/EFL teachers, much that has to do with conjunctions is fairly straightforward for advanced-level students. Nevertheless, the processes of coordination will have to be taught so that beginning-level ESL/EFL students can learn to produce and understand conjoined constructions.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** A focus on coordination in English is a good context in which to begin to deal with grammatical parallelism—that is, the coordination of like constituents while avoiding the coordination of unlike constituents. (Lack of parallelism is often seen as a problem in native English student writing as well.) Students can be presented with sentences from a text like the following or shown samples of their own or other students' work; they can be asked to determine whether the sentences are properly formed and to fix those that are not:

Weather is the effect of four forces: temperature, humid, wind, and the fourth force is pressure.

Warm air rises, it cools, and forms clouds.

The climate of northern Africa is hot and dry, in southeast Asia is hot and wet, and cold in northern Europe.

Creating parallel structures is strikingly like the addition of fractions: one cannot add fractions unless a common denominator exists. The idea that the process of forming parallel structures is exactly like that of finding common denominators may in fact be helpful to students who enjoy doing math.

2. **Form/Meaning.** The following exercise can be used to create the contexts for practicing *so/too/either/neither* forms. Students in pairs can draw up individual lists in which they describe their most and least favorite activities, their most and least favorite subjects in school, the things that they have never done that they would like to do, or the jobs that they would most and least like to have. (You might think up other possibilities, but the idea is to elicit points of agreement of both positive and negative types.) Students then compare lists and make note of the areas in which they agree. They then report to the class on the content of their lists; students take turns reading items where there is agreement:

Maria: Tomomi wants to visit Las Vegas, and so do I.

Tomomi: Maria would not like to major in engineering, and neither would I.

3. **Form/Meaning.** In the context of a discussion of world geography or cultures, students may be presented with a map of the world. One student can go up to the map and point to two countries, then ask another student to make a statement that is true of both countries. For example, if the student points to Russia and Canada, possible answers might be:

Russia is in the far northern part of the world, and Canada is, too.

Both Russia and Canada reach from one end of a continent to the other end.

Russia does not have banana trees, and Canada does not have them, either.

The student who answers with a true statement may then go up to the map and point to two countries of his/her own choosing. Students take turns in this way until every student has asked and answered a question.

4. **Form/Meaning.** Shaw and Taylor (1978) have suggested that nonpictorial visual aids can be very useful stimuli for encouraging the use of conjoined sentences in communicative exchanges among class members. For example, a baseball box score clipped from the previous day's newspaper could provide an opportunity for relevant practice. The statistics could allow for conjoined sentences, such as:

The Atlanta Braves scored eight runs, but they didn't win the game.

One player hit a single, a double, and a home run.

The Oakland Athletics didn't make an error, nor did the Royals.

5. **Form/Meaning.** The use of coordination with *too/either/neither* takes practice for ESL/EFL students to master. This is so partially because of structural difficulties; for *either/neither*, it is so also for another reason. Many languages—east Asian languages, for example—show agreement with a negative statement by asserting affirmation rather than negation. As we saw when discussing negative *yes/no* questions, when the question tag “You aren't from Japan, are you?” is used, the speaker will agree by saying “Yes” (meaning, “No, I am not from Japan”). This potentially confusing difference carries over to *neither* structures, where one student will say, “I am not finished with my studies,” and a second student will comment, “So am I” (or “Me, too” meaning “Neither am I”).

One possibility is to have one student make a statement about a like or dislike, about his or her studies, or about another topic and have a second student comment on the statement with respect to himself or herself in the following manner:

Student 1: I don't like liver.

Student 2: I don't like liver, either.

A third student can then comment on the information given by students 1 and 2, saying:

Student 3: Neither Mariko nor Ali likes liver.

Mariko doesn't like liver, and Ali doesn't like liver, either.

Mariko doesn't like liver, and neither does Ali.

Should a sequence like the one here occur:

Student 1: I don't like liver.

Student 2: *So do I.

and if Student 3 cannot recognize and acknowledge it as an unacceptable response, the teacher can step in and model a more appropriate response.

6. **Form/Meaning.** A variation of the previous exercise, useful for writing, has the students making lists of their likes and dislikes with regard to the city they are staying in, and then comparing lists like those here. This works well as a pair activity:

Ali

1 I don't like the weather.

2 I don't like the dirty air.

3 I don't like the subways.

4 I like the food.

5 I like the people.

6 I like the museums.

Mariko

I don't like the food.

I don't like the weather.

I don't like the noise.

I like the people.

I like the school.

I like the subways.

From this list, Ali, for example, may derive the following comparisons:

I don't like the weather, and neither does Mariko.

I don't like the subways, but Mariko does.

I like the food, but Mariko doesn't.

I like the people, and so does Mariko.

7. **Form/Meaning.** Ur (1988) describes an activity that gives students practice with correlative conjunctions. Students first are given a list of activities, such as painting a picture, playing basketball, helping to move heavy furniture, singing a high part in a song, and so on. Next, students receive brief descriptions of a few people. Students then are asked to say which people are likely to be able to do the activity; for example:

Either Teresa or Joanna could paint a picture.

Neither Umberto nor Ramón could sing a high part in a song.

8. **Form.** Thewlis (2007) suggests working with students on avoiding run-on or run-together sentences in which coordinating conjunctions are omitted or sentences containing them are incorrectly punctuated. Give students a paragraph in which you have intentionally run together certain sentences, and ask them to correct it.

Alternatively, gather run-on sentences from students' compositions, and ask the students to correct the errors. (Note that if you choose this alternative, there should be at least one error from almost every person in the class so as to avoid stigmatizing any of the students.)

9. **Use.** Record a conversation and bring it to class. Ask students to listen to it and to make note of the coordinating conjunctions that they hear. Which of them are conjunctions and which are used as discourse markers? Can the students figure out their function?

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. *Provide example sentences that illustrate the following terms. Underline the pertinent words in your examples.*
 - a. coordination
 - b. coordinating conjunction
 - c. correlative conjunction
 - d. *respectively*
 - e. ellipsis
 - f. gapping
2. *Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences:*
 - a. They were invited for dinner with Paul and Paulette.
 - b. Wendy played the piano, and Erik sang.
3. *Explain by means of trees the ambiguity in the following sentence:*

Pam drinks coffee and milk.
4. *Do could really be called a pro-VP, not a pro-verb. Explain.*

Test your ability to apply what you know.

5. *Suppose that your students produce the following sentences. What guidance would you give them?*
- a. *Either Helen or Judy are going to be the president next year.
 - b. *I couldn't go to a university in my country, and my sister couldn't go, too.
 - c. *The doctor couldn't be found anywhere, and the nurse neither.
 - d. *You didn't ask me, neither I asked you.
 - e. *Bill can play tennis, and John can.
 - f. *Fred paid Bill and Bill paid Fred, respectively.
6. *While this chapter gives examples of many types of coordinated constituents, no examples of coordinated prepositions were listed. Can two prepositions be coordinated? If so, provide some examples.*
7. *An additional item frequently cited as a correlative conjunction is the sequence not only . . . but also.*
- a. *Can not only . . . but also coordinate successfully for all word and phrase categories? Will additional changes be necessary in some cases?*
 - b. *Can you find an acceptable example of the use of this sequence at the clause-to-clause level?*
8. *A student tells you that he read the following sentence in a news report:*
- The police found him penniless and without visible means of support.**
- She tells you that she thought that and had to connect phrases with the same part of speech. What would you tell her?*
9. *Suppose that a student tells you that he or she has heard the following sentence spoken by a native speaker of English:*
- I'm neither going to make a salad or anything else today.**
- Having learned that neither should be followed by nor, the student is confused and asks for an explanation. What would you tell the student?*
10. *A writing student produces an essay, an excerpt from which appears here:*
- It was a warm day, and we were feeling like nothing could happen to us because we were young and everything looked so beautiful in the mountains, and we went to pick up my brother because he was coming with us. We began our bicycle trip from my brother's house, and he lived not so far from the mountains, and so we rode directly in the direction of the mountains, and we felt the warm breeze on our faces and bodies, and after about one half-hour we reached the mountains, and it was cooler there. . . .**
- There are many possible ways for a teacher to respond to descriptive writing. Would you respond to the student's frequent use of and in this excerpt? If so, what might your response be? If you would rather not respond directly, what general comment can you make on the use of and in this piece?*

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For linguistic treatments of conjunction, see:

- Baker, C. L. (1995). *English syntax* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hudson, R. (1988). Coordination and grammatical relations. *Journal of Linguistics*, 24(2), 303–342.
- Lakoff, R. (1971). *Ifs, ands, and buts* about conjunction. In C. J. Fillmore & D. T. Langendoen (Eds.), *Studies in linguistic semantics* (pp. 114–149). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Lenker, U., & Meurman-Solin, A. (Eds.). (2007). *Connectives in the history of English: Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 283*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

For gapping, consult:

- Hudson, R. A. (1989). Gapping and grammatical relations. *Journal of Linguistics*, 24(2), 303–342.

For one of the first articles that addresses the interface between logic and pragmatics, see:

- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics 3: Speech acts* (pp. 41–58). New York, NY: Academic Press.

For an overview of conjunction from the viewpoint of systemic functional grammar, see:

- Martin, J. R. (1992). *English text*. Amsterdam, Netherlands/Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

For treatments of individual conjunctions, consult:

- Blakemore, D. (1988). Denial and contrast: A relevance-theoretic analysis of *but*. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 12, 15–37.
- Blakemore, D. (1988). *So* as a constraint on relevance. In R. Kempson (Ed.), *Mental representations: The interface between language and reality* (pp. 183–195). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
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- Dascal, M., & Katriel, T. (1977). Between semantics and pragmatics: The two types of *but*—Hebrew *aval* and *ela*. *Theoretical Linguistics*, 4, 143–172.

For a study that looks at the effect of discourse markers on ESL/EFL audiences, see:

- Flowerdew, J., & Tauroza, S. (1995). The effect of discourse markers on second-language lecture comprehension. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 17(4), 435–458.

For some practical suggestions on the teaching of conjunctions, especially correlatives, see:

- Frodesen, J., & Eyring, J. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 4* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Rutherford, W. (1975). *Modern English*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

For teaching the punctuation of compound sentences, see:

- Bryd, P., & Benson, B. (1989). *Improving the grammar of written English: The handbook*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Raimes, A. (1990). *How English works*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- The Online Writing Lab at Purdue (OWL). Retrieved from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu>

For a lesson that provides text-based practice with coordinate conjunctions, see:

- Houck, N., & Hilles, S. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 4*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Many good usage manuals offer exercises on grammatical parallelism; for one that is accessible to both ESL/EFL and English native speakers, see:

- Glazier, T. F. (1990). *The least you should know about English*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Endnotes

1. A discussion is found in Bayer (1996) of various instances where unlike categories may be coordinated, such as

Jermaine is boring and a fool.

2. As we will see later in this chapter and in the next, *so* performs a number of functions in English in addition to its roles as a coordinator and subordinator.
 3. In another environment not discussed in this chapter, *so* need not move. This is typically called the *do so* construction, as in
- They asked me to move the car, and I did so.**
4. Stockwell, Schachter, and Partee (1973), in a classic treatment, assumed a rule of “correlative addition,” whereby the word *both* is inserted optionally; this rule captured the essential synonymy of identical sentences, one of which contained *both* while the other did not: *John and his brother are mechanics* versus *Both John and his brother are mechanics*. *Both* may be used to put special focus on the fact that “not just one but two brothers are mechanics.”
 5. The *neither* in this sentence is a quantifier, not a correlative conjunction. Although both forms are identical and obviously related semantically, remember from Chapter 17 that quantifiers can function as determiners (as *neither* does here) or pronouns.
 6. For judgments on Mandarin, thanks go to Regina Wu and to the Taiwanese students in the Summer 1997 Academic English Program at the University of California, Los Angeles.
 7. *But* also has the meaning of “except,” as in

We had everything but what we needed.

This is an historically old use of the word; in this context, it seems to function more as a preposition than as a conjunction and is usually treated as such in descriptive grammars. *But* may also be used in a second seemingly noncontrastive context, where it often combines with *instead*:

The rain did not go away but (instead) came down harder than ever.

In this use, *but* most often coordinates VPs rather than full clauses.

8. This fact seems, incidentally, to be the source of frequent production errors among Chinese ESL/EFL students who attempt to combine *although* at the beginning of an initial clause with *but* at the beginning of the second.
9. Note that the conjunction *so* is generically distinct from the *so* discussed earlier in this chapter as a marker of VP-deleted material:

I can swim, and so can you.

Introduction

Of all the grammatical structures in English, adverbials, including single-word adverbs (*carefully, often*), phrases (*before lunch, at last*), and clauses (*when she had finished, if we still have time*) stand out as the most diverse in their forms and syntactic positions. In introducing adverbial characteristics, Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) call them “the most nebulous and puzzling of the word classes,” adding that “it is tempting to say simply that the adverb is an item that does not fit the definitions for other word classes” (p. 438). Similarly, Hasselgard (2010) has remarked that adverbials may be considered “a rag-bag category in the linguistic system” (p. 3). We might choose a different metaphor to characterize the many useful roles that adverbials play in expressing meanings; however, it does seem to be the case that when a word, phrase, or clause doesn’t clearly fit into some other category, we often opt for that “collection of items” known as adverbials.

The frequency and diversity of adverbials can be seen in the following text examples of spoken and written English from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The adverbials are underlined; adverbials inside larger adverbial structures are indicated in brackets.

When we woke up [the next morning], after we had gone [through the wind and the rain and the waiting room], the windows blew in and they had kept the baby safe in the middle of the hospital . . . (CBS *The Early Show*, August 28, 2010)

Previously unearthed fossils . . . indicate that modern humans moved from Africa to the Middle East approximately 100,000 years ago but, either because they died out or returned [to Africa], gave way to Neanderthals by 70,000 years ago. (*Science News*, February 26, 2011, p. 5)

One of the largest categories of English adverbials, and most frequently used across all registers, are adverbials used to provide information about events and actions, including direction, position, manner, time, frequency, purpose, reason, among others (see Chapter 6). Most of the adverbials in the examples above fall into this category. They correspond to the traditional definitions of adverbs, often explained as answering questions such as *Where*, *When*, *How*, and *Why*. This large group of adverbials has traditionally been termed *adjunct adverbials* (Quirk et al., 1985). However, other classifying terms reflect their functions: Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) call them *circumstance adverbials* (p. 763); similarly, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) term them *circumstantial adverbials* (p. 123). Since

much current corpus-based research on adverbials refers to Biber et. al.'s categories in the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*, we will use the term *circumstance adverbials* in this chapter.

Because there are so many types of circumstance adverbials, it should not come as a surprise that they have been subclassified in English grammars in different ways; the varying terminology and labels can be confusing for teachers and students alike. As Hasselgard (2010) has stated, "A striking feature of adverbials is that there are hardly any two grammars that use the same classification scheme and/or terminology" (p. 21). For example, she notes that Quirk et al. (1985) classify some adverbials that express temporal relationships, such as frequency adverbs *seldom* and *never*, in a separate category called *subjuncts*, whereas Biber et al. (1999) include them with circumstance time adverbials. For teaching purposes, you will most likely choose only a subset of circumstance adverbials and their subcategories (e.g., direction and position as subcategories of place). We have done much the same thing in this chapter, selecting those categories that are the most frequent and, we think, most useful.

Aside from circumstance adverbials, the other major category of adverbials we will be looking at in this chapter is one which deals with the attitudes of speakers and writers toward their content. These have commonly been referred to as *stance adverbials*. Here are some spoken and written examples (some from COCA) with the stance adverbials underlined:

No doubt we could have done better with more time.

Neighboring villages had evidently joined the fight; there were 200 people in the makeshift camp now. (*Mother Jones*, March/April 2010, p.36)

Another storm this week in the Northeast and folks are already starting to dig out. . . .

Unfortunately, there is another system on the way in the Great Lakes. (*CBS, The Early Show*, January 27, 2011)

I mean, I read the blogs, and it gets kind of depressing, frankly, to read those blogs. (*This Week*, 2011 [110123])

Technically speaking, he didn't forget. He just didn't think it relevant. (*Analog Science, Fiction and Fact*, September 2010)

As these examples show, stance adverbials have to do with expressing degrees of probability (*no doubt, evidently*), evaluations (*unfortunately*), and the manner in which messages are conveyed (*frankly, technically speaking*). Like the circumstance adverbials, stance adverbials have been subclassified in many ways. In this chapter, we will present classifications that seem most useful for teaching purposes.

In addition to circumstance and stance adverbials, a third category of adverbials are words and phrases used to create logical connections such as contrast, addition, reason/result and concession between sentences and larger parts of discourse, e.g., *however, in addition, as a result*, and *nevertheless*. We will treat these adverbials as a subcategory of "logical connectors," which is the focus of Chapter 26.

As you might expect, since adverbials are so frequent in English and express many common meanings, such as time and place, they are introduced and practiced at every level of ESL/EFL instruction. Even at beginning levels, students study not only single-word adverbs and adverb phrases, but also adverbial prepositional phrases and clauses. For example, consider the adverbials in the sentences that follow, which are used to express time:

I'll call you tomorrow.

I usually get up before 8 A.M.

After I eat breakfast, I check my e-mail.

I have been learning English for two months.

Because of the great variety in the forms, meanings, and uses of adverbials, they pose diverse learning challenges for ESL/EFL students. Here, we list some of the challenges along with examples of learner productions related to each.

| <i>Adverbial Feature</i> | <i>Example of Learner Productions</i> |
|---|--|
| Placement of adverbials in relation to other sentence constituents | *Judy washes <u>often</u> her car. *We are going <u>probably</u> to Hawaii for our spring break. |
| Ordering of adverbials in sequences | *He <u>very carefully usually</u> listens to the directions for assignments. |
| Word forms of single-word adverbs | *My father works very <u>hardly</u> ; he has two jobs. *Emmy Lou Harris sings <u>beautiful</u> . |
| Structures of prepositional phrases (in contrast to adverb clauses) | * <u>In spite of</u> I don't like sushi, I tried some at my friend's house. |
| Using stance adverbials appropriately in speech and writing | Teacher: Raul, how about you? Do you like sushi? Raul: ? <u>Of course</u> I do. (While this is correct in form, it could be a pragmatic error; i.e., an error of appropriateness in use.) |

We have already discussed adverbials briefly in Chapter 2 (grammatical terminology), and Chapter 6 (phrase structure rules), and again in Chapter 21 (prepositions). In this chapter, we provide an overview of adverbials in terms of their major phrasal and clausal types, including participles functioning as adverbials, complementing the section in Chapter 20 (adjectives) that examined participles functioning as adjectivals. We also examine what types of adverbials occur in sentence-final and in sentence-initial position, and we give special attention to preverbal adverbs of frequency¹ (e.g., *sometimes*, *often*, *never*) since they occur primarily—though not exclusively—before main verbs in sentence medial position. As mentioned previously, this chapter is a general overview. Other specific topics involving adverbials are covered in later chapters: Logical connectors are focused on in Chapter 26 and adverbial conditional clauses in Chapter 27. Relative adverbials are discussed in Chapter 29, and adverbials of degree are treated in Chapters 34 and 35.

We begin this chapter with a review and expansion of the rules stated in Chapter 6 for sentence-final adverbials; then we treat sentence-initial adverbials before considering some issues of form and use that pertain to both sentence-final and sentence-initial adverbials. Our discussion of adverb clauses in conversation and writing considers differences in uses across registers, including adverb clauses in conversation that stand alone, apart from independent clauses. We then turn to participles functioning as adverbials, before finally treating preverbal adverbs of frequency.

Sentence-Final Adverbials: Forms, Meanings, and Uses

According to Biber et al. (1999), sentence-final adverbials are by far the most frequent type of adverbials in English across all registers and text types (p. 765). Hasselgard's (2010) analysis of circumstance adverbials in a 60,000-word corpus supports this claim. Her investigation of spoken and written texts from the British sub-corpus of the International Corpus of English (ICE-GB) revealed that 77 percent of the adverbials occurred in sentence-final position.

In our discussion to come, we will look further into the frequencies of the various forms and meaning subcategories of sentence-final adverbials. As you will see, sentence-final adverbials can be characterized not only by their forms, but also by their typical meanings and the particular roles that they play in spoken and written discourse.

FORM OF SENTENCE-FINAL ADVERBIALS

As shown in our phrase structure rules in Chapter 6, sentence-final adverbials occur in the form of adverb clauses, adverb phrases, or prepositional phrases:

PRED → **AUX VP (ADVLⁿ)**

ADVL → { **AdvCl**
AdvP
PrepP }

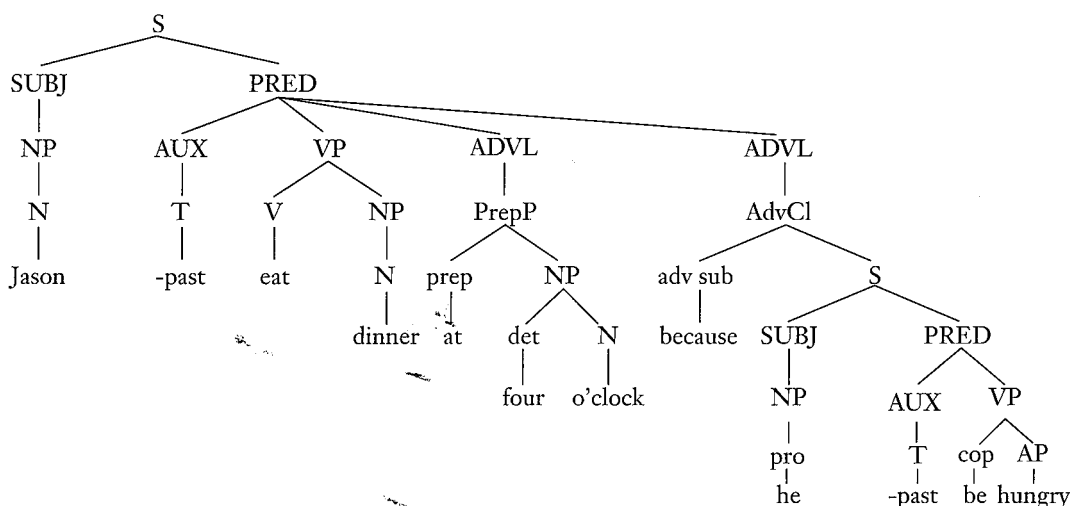
Adverb clause: **Mary danced while John played the piano.**

Adverb phrase: **Mary danced very gracefully.**

Prepositional phrase: **Mary danced in the living room.**

Here is an example tree diagram of a sentence with two final adverbials

Jason ate dinner at four o'clock because he was hungry.



MEANING OF SENTENCE-FINAL ADVERBIALS

Some of the most common meanings of adverbials in all registers are presented in the following table. As this table shows, not every form combines with every subtype of adverbial.

FORM AND MEANING OF SENTENCE-FINAL ADVERBIALS

| | <i>Form of Sentence-Final Adverbials</i> | | |
|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Meaning of Adverbial</i> | <i>Adverb Clause</i> | <i>Adverb Phrase</i> | <i>Prepositional Phrase</i> |
| <i>Place</i> | | | |
| <i>Direction</i> | — | (far) north | to the store ø² there |
| <i>Position</i> | where the road ends | (quite) locally | in the middle ø here |
| <i>Distance</i> | as far as we could see | (very) far | for a long way ø several miles |
| <i>Time</i> | after he saw the report | (fairly) recently | at six o'clock ø next week |
| <i>Duration</i> | as long as you are able | (quite) briefly | for two months |
| <i>Frequency</i> | as often as I can³ | (almost) always | ø every Monday |
| <i>Temporal relationship</i> | after they saw the report while we were sleeping | (much) later | after the storm |
| <i>Manner</i> | just as I do as though it didn't matter | (very) quickly | with care like a hawk |
| <i>Instrument</i> | — | — | with a hammer |
| <i>Reason/Cause</i> | because we were tired since it was important | — | because of the weather⁴ due to the accident of a broken heart |
| <i>Purpose</i> | in order to finish the job⁵ to explain what happened | — | for the glory |
| <i>Concession</i> | though he disagreed although it was early | | despite her fears in spite of our doubts |
| <i>Addition</i> | — | too as well | in addition to his salary |
| <i>Extent/Degree</i> | | completely somewhat | by about twice the normal rate |

A study focused only on sentence-final adverbials was done by Miller (1991). His analysis of almost 3,000 clause-final adverbials in a 50,000-word corpus (roughly half speech and half writing) revealed that approximately 75 percent of the adverbials were prepositional phrases. These findings indicate that prepositional phrases are an important adverbial structure for grammar focus in ESL/EFL classrooms.

USE OF SENTENCE-FINAL ADVERBIALS

Although circumstance adverbials can also occur in sentence-initial and sentence-medial positions, in their sentence-final roles, they tend to be related more closely to the verb phrases that they modify. And in some cases, they are required to complete the meaning of verb phrases, as in the following sentences:

She put her coat *on the chair*.

The ladder lay *on the ground*.

As we pointed out in Chapter 6, when more than one sentence-final adverbial is used to describe an event, there are patterns that tend to be followed. The next table summarizes these patterns.

| ORDER PATTERNS OF SENTENCE-FINAL ADVERBIALS | |
|--|---|
| Order Patterns | Examples |
| Direction before position | I last saw Phil walking down the street in Atlanta. |
| Manner before time or frequency | Mrs. Lee worked very quickly yesterday. |
| Direction or position before time or frequency | Tourists travel to the Caribbean every December. |
| Reason or purpose follow other adverbials | Kuniko studies hard to get good grades. |

This information allows us to propose the following rule of thumb regarding the unmarked ordering of sentence-final adverbials:

direction + position \longleftrightarrow **manner + time** \longleftrightarrow **frequency + purpose + reason**

These sequencing patterns were explored in the previously mentioned study by Miller (1991). His analysis strongly confirmed the patterns shown in the table above, with the following findings:

- Direction comes before position (92 percent)
- Manner comes before time or frequency (75 percent)
- Direction or position come before time or frequency (80 percent)
- Reason or purpose come after other adverbials (75 percent)

The motivations for some of these preferred patterns stem from the verbs they modify. For example, direction and position adverbials typically occur before time adverbials because they are more closely related to the verbs as in this example: *I will drive to the airport tomorrow*. Note that *tomorrow* could be repositioned quite far from the verb; e.g., *Tomorrow, all the members of my family will drive to the airport*. It would sound odd to move *to the airport* away from the verb: *?To the airport all the members of my family will drive tomorrow*. When speakers or writers do not follow these preferred orderings, their motivation may relate to the principle of end-focus, which we saw operating in sentences with indirect objects and separable phrasal verbs. This information structure principle, holds that it is rare for the first of two items in a sequence to be longer than the second one (Biber et al., 1999, p. 813). Miller's (1991) study found that the principle of shorter constituents preceding longer ones also applied to the sequencing of adverbial strings that included adverb phrases and adverb clauses; adverb phrases tended to occur first in a string (61 percent of the time) and adverb clauses tended to occur last (78 percent of the time) as in this example, which also has a single manner adverb (*comfortably*)

as the first modifier. Here we see that contrary to the preferred pattern, a time clause follows a purpose clause, presumably due to the length of the former:

Manner adverb Position prepositional phrase

Mary Morris is resting comfortably at her Buttonwillow home

Purpose clause

Time clause

to finish her recuperation after her doctors released her this morning.

How often do strings of sentence-final adverbials occur in spoken and written English? Miller's (1991) analysis revealed that strings with more than three sentence-final adverbials—while possible—were extremely rare. In fact, in his data, only 27 percent of sentence-final adverbials occurred with another adverbial, and of those, the majority occurred with only one other (e.g., *They raced up the slope to the steppes*. Only 4 percent were found in strings of three final adverbials (e.g., *They raced up the slope to the steppes beyond*.) As you might expect, Miller found that multiple adverbials tended to be more frequent in writing than in speech.

A final observation regarding sentence-final adverbials concerns their scope; that is, the extent to which they modify other parts of a sentence. In general, adverbials used in sentence-final positions are more limited in scope than the adverbials that occur in other positions. For example, compare the scope of two sentence-final circumstance adverbials with the scope of the adverbials in other positions:

Sentence-final adverbials:

The taxi driver helped us put our luggage *in the trunk*.

I'll call you *Monday morning*.

Sentence-initial and sentence-medial adverbials:

***Certainly*, after we finish this project, we will deserve a vacation!**

She is *evidently* not planning to join us for dinner.

As these examples show, the different sentence positions tend to be occupied by different meaning categories. The sentence-final adverbials above express place and time, whereas the sentence-initial and sentence-medial adverbials express meanings related to speaker stance.⁶

As we will discuss in the next section, not all sentence-initial and sentence-medial adverbials modify an entire clause or sentence. However, many of them, unlike the sentence-final adverbials, do.

Form, Meaning, and Use of Sentence-Initial Adverbials

FORM OF SENTENCE-INITIAL ADVERBIALS

Like sentence-final adverbials, sentence-initial adverbials can be adverb phrases (which includes single words), prepositional phrases, or adverb clauses:

Adverb phrase: ***Fortunately*, Helen won the election.**

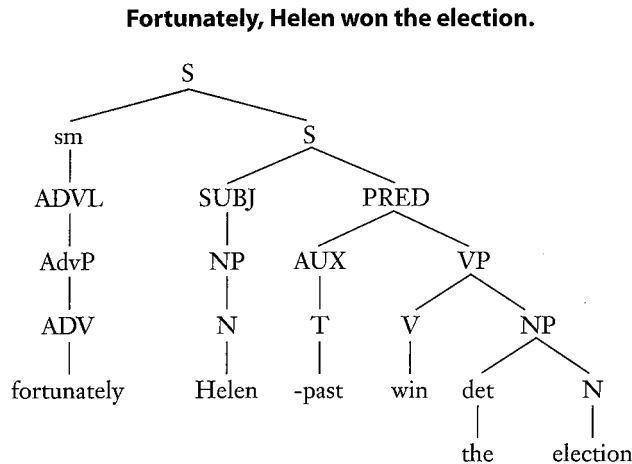
Prepositional phrase: ***With our help*, Helen won the election.**

Adverb clause: ***After we held a recount*, Helen won the election.**

In order to account structurally for the possibility of having one or more adverbials in initial position, we allow the sentence modifier (sm) to include sentential adverbials as one of many possibilities (i.e., along with *not*, *Q*, etc.). As Quirk et al. (1985) point out, initial adverbials “are

syntactically more detached and in some respects ‘superordinate’ in that they have a scope that extends over the sentence as a whole” (p. 613).

We have encountered such sentences in Chapter 6. Here is another example tree diagram for a sentence with this type of adverbial:



We could change the sentence modifier so that instead of being a single adverb phrase like “fortunately,” it is a prepositional phrase (e.g., *of course, with our help*) or an adverb clause (e.g., *when we all voted; after we held a recount*). With the exception of *fortunately* and *of course*, the other sentence-initial adverbials do not express speaker stance and attitude.⁷ However, like the single-word adverbs, their scope also includes the entire following sentence. We say more about the use of sentence-initial adverbials in a later section.

MEANING OF SENTENCE-INITIAL ADVERBIALS

As the phrasal and clausal examples given here illustrate, circumstance adverbials can occur in initial as well as final positions, especially adverb clauses (e.g., *after we held a recount*). In this position, such clauses have different uses than sentence-final clauses do. Some of these differences will be discussed later in our section devoted to adverb clauses. As for other circumstance adverbials, we have already noted that the great majority of them occur in final position. Only time adverbials occur sentence-initially with any frequency: approximately 20 percent across spoken and written registers (Biber et al., 1999, p. 802). In an interesting corpus study, Diessel (2008) shows that although temporal clauses generally follow main clauses as do other adverb clauses, there is a correlation between clause order and iconicity. What this means is that temporal clauses denoting prior events precede the main clause more often than temporal clauses that denote events that occur after or simultaneous to the one expressed in the main clause. Diessel attributes this finding to the fact that the iconic sequence makes complex sentences easier to process.

Other than circumstance adverb clauses (and logical connectors, the topic of the next chapter), sentence-initial adverbials are typically those related to speaker attitude or stance, the second semantic category we introduced at the beginning of this chapter. Like circumstance adverbials, stance adverbials have been subclassified in different ways, as being “epistemic” (Lyons, 1979), “evaluative” (Ernst, 1984), “evidential” (Chafe & Nichols, 1986; Palmer, 1988), “factive” (Koktova, 1986a; 1986b), and “attitudinal” (Greenbaum, 1969).

We find it useful to refer to the four functional categories given by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) for sentence-initial adverbials, all of which refer to a different facet of speaker attitude:

Probability: **maybe, perhaps, certainly, surely**

Usuality: **usually, generally, typically, occasionally**

Presumption: **of course, obviously, clearly, evidently**

Desirability: **(un)fortunately, luckily, hopefully, regrettably**

The most comprehensive data-based study of sentence-initial adverbials was done by Lee (1991). In her analysis of 736 sentence-initial adverbials in a 675,000-word corpus, she found the following distribution (Lee, 1991, p. 29):

| | | | |
|--------------|---------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| probability | 280/736 | 38 percent | (e.g., <i>(un)fortunately</i>) |
| usuality | 200/736 | 27 percent | (e.g., <i>sometimes, often</i>) |
| presumption | 199/736 | 27 percent | (e.g., <i>of course, obviously</i>) |
| desirability | 57/736 | 8 percent | (e.g., <i>maybe, perhaps</i>) |

If we consider the kinds of meanings expressed in the four categories, it is not surprising that the first three categories are well represented in Lee's corpus, while the fourth was not particularly frequent. The first three categories contain adverbials such as *maybe, sometimes, and of course*, which are very common in speech and writing. We might expect attitude markers such as *(un)fortunately* to be much less frequent, especially in speech.

Maybe versus Perhaps. Lee's (1991) findings about the highly frequent sentence-initial adverbials *maybe* and *perhaps* parallel the findings of Biber et al. (1999) across all sentence positions. Lee found that *maybe* occurred twice as often in speech as in writing, while *perhaps* had the reverse pattern. Similarly, in Biber et al.'s conversational corpus, *maybe* was much more common (500 occurrences per million words) across all sentence positions than *perhaps* (200 per million words). An interesting difference identified in Biber et al.'s conversational corpus of American and British English is that *maybe* is much more common in American English (800 occurrences per million words versus only 200 per million in British English).

Obviously versus Clearly. A number of studies have looked at the contrasts between adverbials that have similar meanings. Simon-Vandenberg and Aijmer (2007) summarize several studies that have distinguished uses of these adverbials. They note that while in the system of Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), *surely* is listed with *of course, obviously, and clearly*, indicating "obviousness," a study by Downing (2001) showed that *surely* signals not only certainty but also surprise. Downing also found, comparing usage in speech acts such as questioning or seeking agreement, that the functions of *surely* varied depending on the speech act and, in some cases, was even challenging or confrontational.

Certainly versus Obviously. Another study by Barbaresi (1987) found that *certainly* and *obviously* were used differently in one genre of academic writing. In Barbaresi's data of 60 scientific articles in economics, *certainly* was used epistemically (that is, to convey the degree of certainty a writer had about information)⁸, whereas *obviously* served as a rhetorical strategy device to express something that the writer assumed could be easily perceived by someone; in other words, the writer feels that readers can easily infer the truth of the information.

Certainly versus Definitely. Simon-Vandenberg (2008) found that in the BNC *certainly* was used more often in formal and public speech and writing whereas *definitely* occurs more frequently in informal and private dialogue. She also reported that *certainly* typically is used in contrasts, while *definitely* generally signals emphasis. In addition, the two prefer different modifiers: *almost* certainly but *most* definitely.

Of Course versus Obviously. Simon-Vandenberg and Aijmer (2007) add that *obviously* is often less authoritative than *of course* and primarily expresses the meaning “as evidence shows” rather than “as we all know” (p. 312). They suggest that *of course* expresses more authority, emphasizing the speaker’s belief that the hearer should know the information. In their data from the ICE-GB corpus, they found a striking difference between the frequencies of *obviously* and *of course* in broadcast discussions compared to casual conversations. While *obviously* and *of course* occurred with about the same frequency in conversation (482 versus 422 per million, respectively), in the broadcast discussion data, there were only 25 occurrences of *obviously* per 1 million words, compared to 975 occurrences of *of course*.

Focusing on differences between speech and writing in the use of *of course*, Simon-Vandenberg (1992) found distinct usage differences between two genres—casual conversation and political interviews. Whereas *of course* was used in conversation to express solidarity and politeness, its use in political speech involved primarily expressions of power and authority.

Sometimes. A stance adverbial may differ in use not only across registers or genres, but also depending on its role in the development of a text, either spoken or written. Lee (1991) found that the discourse functions of *sometimes* varied depending on where it occurred sentence-initially in a paragraph or episode. She summarized her finding as follows:

When it was used paragraph- or episode-initially (22/77 occurrences), *sometimes* functions to present the topic and create a transition with what preceded it:

Sometimes the truth itself is better than fiction. An almost illiterate man served three years in jail for a warehouse robbery he insisted he didn’t commit. His defense was that he was a mile away in a shopping plaza, but he had no witnesses. (Lee, 1991, p. 58)

In paragraph- or episode-medial positions (42/77 occurrences), *sometimes* elaborates upon or restates the preceding argument:

Well, there are some aspects that overlap. Sometimes, say, for instance, the matter of point of view will come up in a poem. . . . It’s crucial in fiction, and it’s not something you think a lot about in poetry. . . . (Lee, 1991, p. 60)

As a paragraph- or episode-final marker (13/77 tokens), *sometimes* is used to sum up the preceding arguments, to show the result of a process or some change, or to offer a final alternative, as in the last sentence of the following speaker turn:

“It used to be,” said my friend, Beth, grieving the death of her middle son, “that whenever I’d catch myself in repose, I’d be aware that I wasn’t happy. . . . Somewhere along the way, there has been a change. I’m no longer feeling that ever-present sorrow. I feel comfortable again in moments of repose. Sometimes I feel very happy.” (Lee, 1991, pp. 60–61)

Fortunately versus Unfortunately. Students can also benefit from developing awareness of other structures that co-occur with stance adverbials, structures that help to reveal discourse functions of these adverbials. For example, Lee (1991) looked at the different uses of the stance pair *fortunately* and *unfortunately* in writing. She found that *unfortunately* (which was used twice as frequently as *fortunately*), tends to co-occur with other grammatical and lexical items expressing a negative or problematic situation:

[in a review of P. Skira’s *Still Life: A History*]

[The genre of still life] has suffered from relative scholarly neglect in spite of the almost hypnotic appeal exerted by many of the images . . . produced by . . . our greatest artists. . . . Unfortunately, this volume fails to fill the void. It does not supersede

Charles Sterling's "Still Life Painting . . ." (1959), which, regrettably, was reprinted in 1981 with only black-and-white illustrations. (Lee, 1991, p. 83)

In contrast to the use of *unfortunately* to foreground problems, *fortunately* follows the statement of a problem, indicating the speaker's conviction that the reality of a situation is more positive than prior information might lead one to expect:

[from a review of a restaurant]

The Cactus Café is the front end of a comedy nightclub, The New Improvisation, in Santa Monica. But these ungainly air ducts hanging down from the ceiling aren't funny . . .

Fortunately, though, the Cactus Café is a pretty comfortable room, with its surprisingly high ceiling and mirrors. It's a pleasant place to sit and eat . . . (Lee, 1991, p. 87)

These kinds of generalizations about stance markers can be especially useful in helping students in their reading of difficult texts to predict more quickly how two sections joined by these stance markers are related to each other.

All of these studies we have discussed indicate that while groups of stance adverbials with similar meanings sometimes have similar uses, in many contexts, they are used for different purposes, reflecting to varying degrees speaker authority and speaker assumptions of what the hearer should know. And the same stance adverbial often has different functions in different genres or even in different parts of a text's development. Thus, in teaching students about stance adverbials, especially at more advanced levels, it is important to help them become aware of usage differences across registers and genres.

Other adverbials that are very common in initial position are actuality markers (e.g., *really, actually*) (see Liu and Espino, 2012), conversational imprecision markers (e.g., *kind of, sort of, like*), and style adverbials (e.g., *honestly, confidentially*) (Biber et al. 1999).

USE OF SENTENCE-INITIAL ADVERBIALS

There tend to be two primary motivations for placing circumstance adverbials in sentence-initial position. One is to place special focus or emphasis on this information (examples from COCA):

During the last quarter mile, I felt like I was going to collapse. (*Backpacker*, August 2010)

The discourse functions of focus and emphasis for adverbials and other structures will be discussed in detail in Chapter 30.

A second discourse motivation for sentence-initial circumstance adverbials is to create a link to preceding text, as in this example, which follows a description of a woman getting assessed for a physical ailment.

In the previous month, her bizarre constellation of symptoms, the most prominent of which was shortness of breath, had grown much worse . . . (*Health*, 2011 [110329])

Sentence-initial adverb clauses play an important role in creating cohesive connections in written discourse; their use for this purpose will be discussed further in the next section.

With Respect To/As For. One category of circumstance adverbial not discussed earlier is that which is used to define or limit the scope of a topic to be discussed. Unlike other circumstance adverbials, adverbials in this category occur sentence initially; it includes phrases such as *with respect to* and *as for*. Termed *adverbials of respect* by Biber et al. (1999), these adverbials are especially common in written registers and formal speech. Biber et al. comment that these adverbials have functions similar to both logical connectors (e.g., *however, therefore*) and stance adverbials (e.g., *certainly, fortunately*). Like logical connectors, they can introduce a new topic connected to a previous one. And like stance adverbials, they can express the speaker's perspective on the truth of what follows, though not as strongly as the stance adverbials do (p. 805). The

following examples from COCA illustrate the functions of linking to previous topics in defining a new topic:

... a stress response that interrupts the body's ability to fight cancer cell development might be at work. *With respect to heart disease, a more complex set of potential pathways . . . has been proposed.* (*American Journal of Public Health*, January 2011)

The extra-wide (toothbrush) head contains 65% more bristle tufts than standard models . . . and, in a world that apparently has gone eco-wild, they are a favorite among the greenies since they last up to three times longer than normal brands. *As for the cases, they are designed without drain holes.* (*USA Today*, March, 2011)

Stance Marker Collocations

Also deserving of attention in teaching the uses of initial stance adverbials are the lexicogrammatical patterns in which they are found, especially in academic writing. As one example, the stance marker *perhaps* often collocates with a variety of superlatives + classifier nouns (e.g., *perhaps the best approach, perhaps the worst example*) in written texts as in these examples from COCA:

perhaps + positive superlative:

**the best strategy; the best illustration; the strongest evidence;
the most convincing case**

perhaps + negative superlative:

**the biggest problem/hurdle/obstacle/sticking point;
the greatest limitation; the worst failure; the most troubling case**

perhaps + neutral superlative:

**the most common type; the most striking difference;
the most widely used method**

By checking collocation patterns of stance adverbials through concordancers such as COCA and the Compleat Lexical Tutor,⁹ teachers can help students use these lexicogrammatical resources appropriately.

The study of adverb clauses in languages of the world by Thompson, Longacre, and Hwang (2007) offers valuable information for ESL/EFL teachers about the ways these clauses are structured, positioned and used across languages. They point out that although “apparently all languages, regardless of their basic word order, have preposed adverbial clauses,” the distributional patterns of preposed clauses differs across languages (p. 295). For example, they note that verb-final languages such as Korean and Japanese use clauses infrequently and then only in conversation. They also point out that English tends to use structures that subordinate one proposition to another more frequently than other languages, such as Chinese, do (p. 241). In addition, they discuss grammatical markers required with adverb clauses in some languages; for example, they note that in Turkish and other languages, *before*-clauses must include a negative marker (p. 248).

Thus, English learners may have a variety of challenges structuring and using adverb clauses in English depending on their native languages. Additional challenges are posed by the multiple semantic meanings of some adverb subordinators, such as *as*, which can express manner, reason, or time.

Uses of Adverb Clauses in Writing and Conversation

Studies in various areas of linguistics—Corpus Linguistics, Conversational Analysis, and Systemic Functional Linguistics—have identified uses of adverb clauses that are distinct from their uses in written registers.

One discourse function of adverb clauses unique to conversation is its use by speakers to add a comment to another's speaker's utterance. Biber et al. (1999) note that conditional adverbials (see Chapter 27) are the most common type that function in this way, representing about 10 percent of all conditional adverb clauses in conversation, as in this example (p. 833):

A: I know we're running late, but the traffic's not too bad, so I think we can still make it to the meeting.

B: If we're lucky.

Other special uses of adverb clauses in conversation were identified by Ford (1993) in her study of 194 clauses. According to Ford, sentence-final adverb clauses with continuing intonation serve to provide new information that qualifies, locates, or completes the meaning of preceding utterances, similar to their use in written discourse. However, sentence-final adverb clauses, produced with their own separate intonation contour, have altogether different functions. Such adverb clauses are used either by the same speaker (to self-edit in response to a perceived problem) or by another speaker (to negotiate understanding). Segments exemplifying both of these cases follow:

[A is telling R about his work situation at a TV studio]

A: But the thing is, they might get their project canceled. (pause)

→ **Because ABC got bought out. Did you hear about that?** (adapted from Ford 1993, p. 111)

[J shows his understanding and agreement with P, whose roommates are out for the night]

P: I've got the apartment to myself, and I'm gonna take advantage of it by going to bed early.

J: Oh.

P: An' they come home, they gonna talk about it. And I'm gonna go to bed.

J: → Before they get there, yeah. (adapted from Ford, 1993, p. 126)

In summary, Ford (1993) shows us how sentence-final adverb clauses that are separated from the main clause with their own intonation contours play a role in the conversational turn-taking system in English.

Other uses of adverb clauses in conversation that are distinct from their uses in formal written English registers have been discussed by Schleppegrell (2004). She notes that *because* clauses in interactional registers create both internal links (usually with reference to something previously stated) and external links (evidence for a claim existing outside the text) as written registers do. An example from her data of both types of links is the following from a discussion between children (p. 57):

internal link

Well like I have a partner that hardly anybody likes because they make fun of her name

external link

because it's Halley, like Halley's comet.

Schleppegrell states that the first *because* in this example “makes an internal link that introduces the reason [the speaker] can make the judgment he has made. His second *because*, on the other hand, makes an external link by explaining why the children make fun of Halley's name.” (p. 57). She provides this example in the context of a discussion on the need for teachers to be aware of how differently clause-combining operates in conversational registers than in academic genres. As she points out, *because* clauses in conversation often “carry less semantic weight,” and their conversational uses often do not transfer well to academic registers, in which writers use other kinds of grammatical constructions to convey logical relationships. Schleppegrell's findings on the range of meanings that *because* clauses

have in informal registers help to explain some uses of these clauses by ESL/EFL writers and native English-speaking developing writers that are inappropriate for more formal registers.

Punctuation with Adverb Clauses

In written English, a sentence-initial adverb clause is normally followed by a comma, whereas a sentence-final adverb clause normally is not preceded by a comma, although there is some variation here (when there is a contrast implied, as we have just demonstrated twice in this sentence):

After Professor James finished the lecture, he asked for questions from the audience.

Professor James asked for questions from the audience after he finished the lecture.

These punctuation conventions reinforce the more salient role in discourse that sentence-initial adverbials have.

Sometimes, if a sentence-final adverb clause is viewed as an afterthought, it too is set off with a comma:

Professor James was willing to answer questions, provided the audience wanted to ask any.

Form, Meaning, and Use of Participles Functioning as Adverbials

In addition to adverb clauses, adverb phrases, and prepositional phrases, we also need to discuss another structure: *-ing* and *-en* adverbial participles.

FORM AND MEANING OF ADVERBIAL PARTICIPLES

The *-ing* participle has three possible forms:

1. **Basic form:** *working* (signals a time overlapping with the time expressed in the main clause), such as:
Working diligently on his paper, John began to type up the bibliography.
2. **Perfective form:** *having worked* (signals a time preceding the time expressed in the main clause), such as:
Having worked on his paper since 4 P.M., John stopped at 8 to watch the DePaul basketball game.
3. **Perfective-progressive form (rare):** *having been working* (signals an action in progress at a time preceding the time expressed in the main clause), such as:
Having been working on his paper for more than a week, John decided he would turn it in without further revision.

The *-en* participle also has three possible forms:

1. **Basic form:** *worn out* (signals a reason for the result expressed in the main clause), such as:
Worn out from all the work, John decided to relax.
2. **Progressive form:** *being worn out* (much like the basic form but with stronger emphasis on the fact that the participle gives a reason or cause for the result expressed in the main clause), such as:
Being worn out from all the work, John decided to relax for the evening.

3. **Perfective form:** *having been worn out* (signals that the action in the participle is completed before—and is also the reason for—the result expressed in the main clause), such as:

Having been worn out from three days' work on his paper, John decided to relax over the weekend.

The basic form is by far the most frequent one for both the *-ing* and the *-en* participle. The other forms do occur, however, and grammar texts sometimes erroneously refer to the progressive and perfective forms of the *-en* participle as instances of the *-ing* participle because of the initial *-ing* forms.

SENTENCE-INITIAL ADVERBIAL PARTICIPLES

The adverbial use of *-ing* and *-en* participles in clause-initial position is a potential problem for native as well as nonnative speakers of English. Errors such as the following are traditionally referred to as “dangling modifiers” or “dangling participles,” and they are the bane of many a high school English teacher’s existence:

***Laughing hysterically and unable to answer Miss Fiddich, she sent poor Tom to the principal’s office.**

***Torn and bent beyond recognition, I received my mother’s letter.**

In such cases, the subject of the participle should also be the subject of the main clause. Whenever this is not the case—as in the two examples above—a dangling participle results.

Danielson and Porter (1990) have pointed out that such participles can usefully be viewed as reduced forms of adverb clauses; however, they caution that the reduction is grammatically acceptable only if both clauses have the same underlying subject. With this condition in mind, we can now correct the above sentences:

Because Tom was laughing hysterically and unable to answer Miss Fiddich, Tom was sent to the principal’s office (by Miss Fiddich). → Laughing hysterically and unable to answer Miss Fiddich, Tom was sent to the principal’s office.

After my mother’s letter had been torn and bent beyond recognition, my mother’s letter was delivered to me yesterday. → Torn and bent beyond recognition, my mother’s letter was delivered to me yesterday.

Both native and nonnative users of English should be given ample opportunity to reduce sentence-initial adverb clauses to participle clauses when the same subject condition is met. Students should also be able to identify clauses that cannot be reduced to participles. Some teachers find it useful to point out to their students the unintended humor that occurs when a dangling participle is interpreted literally; for example:

***Following the recipe carefully, my cake was a great success.** (= My cake followed the recipe carefully!)

***Flattened out of shape by Dmitri’s serve, we could no longer play with the old volleyball.** (= We were flattened out of shape by Dmitri’s serve!)

The same subject participles discussed here are the most common type of sentence-initial adverbial participle; however, it is also possible to have a sentence-initial adverbial participle with a subject that is different from the subject of the main clause. In such a case, the subject of the participle must be overtly stated:

The bus drivers being on strike, many people had to get to work using other means of transportation. (Since the bus drivers were on strike, . . .)

When *-en* participles are used in this type of construction, only the progressive or perfect form of the participle occurs:

The house having been constructed poorly, the new owners had to cope with many unexpected repairs. (Since the house had been constructed poorly, . . .)

Many grammarians refer to the two preceding sentences as *absolute constructions*, which they carefully distinguish from participle clauses. We see no need to do this since the semantic function of the two clause types is parallel. The only difference is whether the subjects of the two clauses are the same or not.

SENTENCE-FINAL ADVERBIAL PARTICIPLE CLAUSES

A sentence-final participle clause is normally detached from the main clause by a comma in writing or by special features in speech, such as a pause before the lowered pitch on the participle clause; for example:

Laura looked at him, consumed with contempt for what he represented.

An old woman shouts out a long apocalyptic interpretation of the Bible, prophesying the immediate arrival of the Messianic Kingdom.

While the use of a sentence-final participle clause seldom leads to ungrammatical sentences in the way that the use of the “dangling modifier” does, a potential for ambiguity exists in those cases where there is more than one noun in the main clause that could be the antecedent of the underlying subject in the participle clause:

?Meg met Tom in the corridor, laughing heartily about what had happened in class.

In the absence of additional context, either *Meg* or *Tom* could be the underlying subject of the participle clause in this sentence. Such ambiguity, however, rarely occurs since first of all, the main clause may have only one noun phrase:

Betty danced joyfully, never suspecting what was about to happen.

Second, for many main clauses with two or more noun phrases, there is usually only one noun phrase that qualifies semantically as the subject of the participle clause:

Sheila ignored the dog and the TV set, deeply engrossed in the new book.

Even though the main clause in this example contains three noun phrases (i.e., *Sheila*, *the dog*, *the TV set*), only *Sheila* can serve as the underlying subject of the participle clause—that is, someone who is deeply engrossed in reading a book.

Note that all the examples we have given here of sentence-final adverbial participles are of the same noun phrase variety—the subject of the participle clause is identical in reference to one of the noun phrases in the main clause. As shown before with sentence-initial clauses, not all sentence-final participle clauses conform to this pattern; some have an overt subject that is not identical in reference to any noun phrase in the main clause:

They decided to wait for dawn, each hiker taking his two-hour turn at watch.

She walked along hurriedly, her purse clutched tightly in her arms.

Again, we feel that there is no significant difference in structure or function between the examples involving identical noun phrases and nonidentical noun phrases. The identical noun phrases have simply been deleted with the remainder of the clause being reduced to a participle.

USE OF ADVERBIAL -ING PARTICIPLE CLAUSES

In carrying out an extensive study of *-ing* participle clauses, Thompson (1983) found that they occurred most frequently in descriptive prose and very rarely in factual, scientific writing. For example, she compared 10,000 words of text from two different sources—a historical narrative and a pharmacology text—and found that the former contained 74 *-ing* participle clauses while the

latter contained only 5. (We feel that a similar ratio would be obtained for *-en* participle clauses if such a count were carried out.) Thompson feels that the differences in frequency can be explained by the discourse function of these participle clauses; namely, they evoke a visual image in the mind of the listener or reader. Thompson's term for this function is "depictive." She adds that the more formal the language and the more descriptive the discourse, the higher the frequency of participle clauses. A corollary of this functional principle is that participle clauses do not occur frequently in speech, since conversation leaves little opportunity for the planning required to make one's language evoke images in the listener's or reader's mind, which is the function of this construction.

Form, Meaning, and Use of Preverbal Adverbs of Frequency

In Chapter 6, we mentioned the adverbials of frequency that usually occur at the end of a sentence. Some of these adverbials express a specific and others a general sense of frequency:

Bob does his laundry *once a week*.
I brush my teeth *every day*. } specific frequency

Helen does the dishes *once in a while*.
You should write your grandparents *every now and then*. } general frequency

If we want to be more precise, we can refer to such adverbials as "adverbials of specific or general frequency."¹⁰ Although these adverbials tend to occur at the end of the sentence (i.e., the activity is in focus), they may also occur initially if the adverbial of frequency is in focus:

***Once a week* Bob does his laundry.**

***Every now and then* you should write your grandparents.**

FORM OF PREVERBAL ADVERBS OF FREQUENCY

In contrast to these adverbials of specific or general frequency, English also has a class of preverbal adverbs of frequency (PAFs) that tend to occur most naturally in the middle of a sentence:¹¹

Josh *never* writes his parents.

Bill has *often* forgotten to make his bed.

Mary is *always* late for class.

I can *usually* do my shopping on Saturday.

As you will see next, the preferred position for such adverbs of frequency is somewhat complicated but predictable. Because of the complexity and crosslinguistic influence, however, misplacement of these forms is a common problem for ESL/EFL learners, who produce ill-formed sentences such as the following:

***Always Mary is coming late to class.**

***Bill has forgotten often to make his bed.**

The Scope of Preverbal Adverbs

Perhaps the most important generalization to make about preverbal adverbs is that in any given sentence, they modify the entire sentence in which they occur. The following paraphrases make this clear:

Barry frequently drives faster than the speed limit. (It is frequently the case that Barry drives faster than the speed limit.)

Cynthia never smiles at strangers. (It is never the case that Cynthia smiles at strangers.)

We can expand our basic phrase structure rule to accommodate preverbal adverbs of frequency in this way:

S → SUBJ (ADVL) PRED

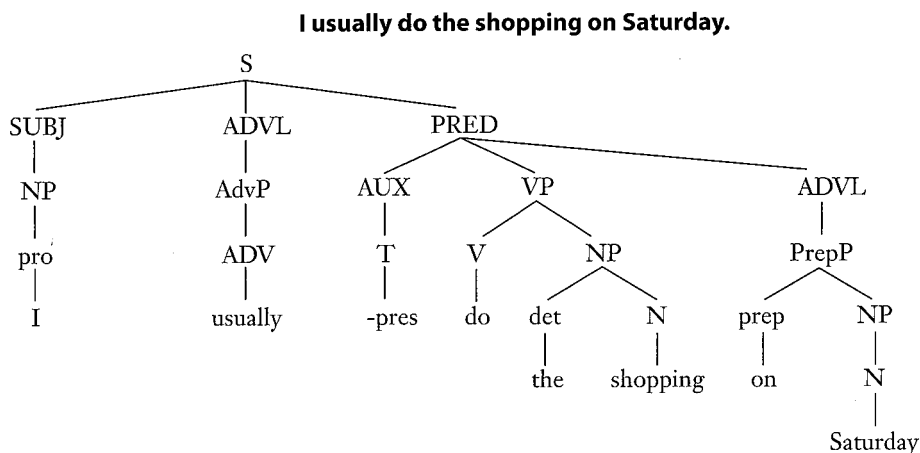
This rule accounts for all indicative and imperative sentences with preverbal adverbs that do not have auxiliary verbs:

Gerald seldom goes to church.

I always do my shopping on Saturday.

Never talk with your mouth full.

The tree diagram here illustrates this rule.



The rule also accounts for all cases where there is an operator (i.e., an auxiliary verb or copula *be*) that carries emphatic or contrastive stress; that is, the preverbal adverb always precedes a stressed auxiliary or copula:

You never *are* ready on time!

Jim never *did* talk to Raymond!¹²

I never *have* met the president!

This rule also applies to reduced sentences where the operator occurs in final position, and thus cannot take reduced stress the way it might if it occurred in a complete sentence, e.g.,

A: Is Mr. Franks strict?

A: I want to be class president.

B: Yes, he often is.

B: You never will (be).

(cf. Yes, he is often strict.)

(cf. You will never be class president.)

Adverbs of frequency can also occupy other positions in the sentence for several principled reasons. First of all, there are many cases in which a sentence contains an unstressed operator (an auxiliary verb or *be* copula). In such cases, the PAF will directly follow this operator as in these examples:

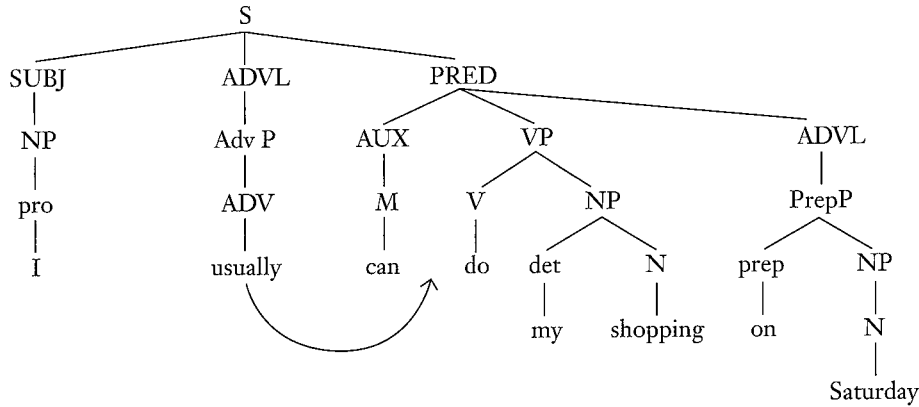
Mary is *always* late for class.

I can *usually* do my shopping on Saturday.

Bill has *often* forgotten to make his bed.

Let us look at the tree diagram for one of these sentences:

I can usually do my shopping on Saturday.



Second, in addition to their position after unstressed operators, some PAFs occur sentence-initially, those that fall into Halliday’s “usuality” category for sentential adverbs (i.e., *sometimes, occasionally, frequently, usually, generally, regularly*).¹³ Finally, some PAFs can occur easily in sentence-final position, including *sometimes, occasionally, often, and frequently*. The other PAFs are awkward (*usually, rarely, seldom*) or ungrammatical (*never, always*) in final position.

However, all preverbal adverbs of frequency can be placed between the subject and the predicate and then adjusted for surface position with respect to the operator, as necessary. In fact, a good piece of evidence for claiming that PAFs initially occur sentence-internally and preverbally are the negative PAFs, which express zero or low frequency: *never, seldom, rarely, scarcely ever, and hardly ever*. When they are used in initial position for purposes of emphasis, we need to invert the subject and the operator in response to the fronting (adding *do* if no operator is present) to ensure grammaticality.¹⁴

We have { **never**
seldom
rarely
scarcely ever
hardly ever } **seen such a sight!**

{ **Never**
Seldom
Rarely
Scarcely ever
Hardly ever } **have we seen such a sight!**¹⁵

If the negative PAFs could be directly placed in initial position, there would be no subject-operator inversion, i.e., the inversion is a reaction to the fronting of the negative adverbial, which has been placed medially.

Statements and Questions with Ever

The particle *ever*¹⁶ interacts with preverbal adverbs of frequency in a number of ways. As shown previously, it is generally used phrasally with *scarcely* and *hardly* when they function as preverbal adverbs of frequency:

Joan has { **scarcely**
hardly } **ever gone to bed after midnight.**

*Joan has { **scarcely**
hardly } **gone to bed after midnight.**

In such cases, *scarcely ever* or *hardly ever* would be placed as phrasal preverbal adverbs in medial position as discussed previously.

Ever can also be used in *yes/no* questions as the most general (i.e., least presupposing) of the PAFs:

Does Mark { **ever**
sometimes
often
usually
always } sing in the shower?

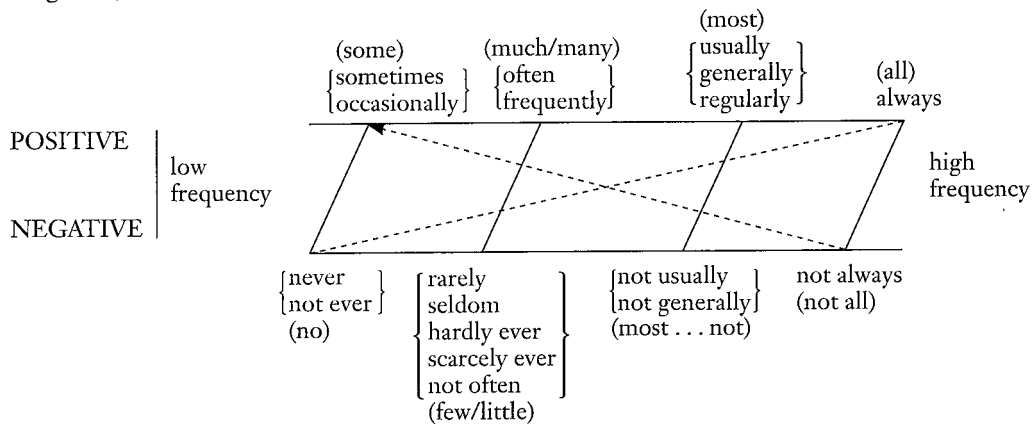
The *wh*-question for all expressions of frequency (including PAFs) is “how often”:

How often does Mark sing in the shower?

MEANING OF PREVERBAL ADVERBS OF FREQUENCY

Resemblance to Quantification

Similar to the quantifiers described in Chapter 17, preverbal adverbs of frequency fall along either the positive or the negative continuum of a scale on which *always* constitutes the positive extreme and *never* the negative one. Again, there are several pairs of positive and negative terms that logically contradict each other. (See the diagonal lines in the diagram.)



The dotted line between *never* and *always* signals an opposition. The dotted line and arrow going from *not always* to *sometimes/occasionally* signals an inverse implication (e.g., saying that Jack is not always on time is the same as saying that Jack is sometimes not on time or that Jack is sometimes late).¹⁷ Because of the semantic similarities between quantifiers and preverbal adverbs of frequency, a semantically related quantifier is indicated in parentheses at each point in the diagram.

Many sentences with preverbal adverbs can in fact be paraphrased with sentence-final adverbials containing semantically related quantifiers:

John always gets up at 7 A.M.

John gets up at 7 A.M. all the time.

Bob sometimes reads the paper.

Bob reads the paper some of the time.

Students often drink beer.

Students drink beer on many occasions.

Likewise, the *wh*-question of frequency “How often?” has its quantifier-based counterpart in “How many times?”

How often have you gone to Boston?

How many times have you gone to Boston?

Negation and Preverbal Adverbs

As Klima (1964) has pointed out, we can verify the negative or affirmative nature of preverbal adverbs by observing their behavior in unmarked tags, since an affirmative preverbal adverb co-occurs with a negative tag and vice versa:

Jason is { **always**
often
sometimes } late, isn't he?

(i.e., these are affirmative preverbal adverbs)

Mavis { **never**
seldom
scarcely ever } goes out, does she?

(i.e., these are negative preverbal adverbs)

Interaction with Not

The semantically strongest negative preverbal adverb of frequency (e.g., *never*) may not co-occur with the negative particle, *not*, if the *not* derives from the sentence modifier:¹⁸

***Jim is not never on time.**

It does occasionally occur with the *not* expressing phrasal negation (see Chapter 10):

Sandra is never able to not eat chocolates.

and it occurs freely with lexical negation (see Chapter 10):

Mrs. Beck has never been unkind.

(Recall that both phrasal and lexical negation are different from syntactic negation.)

The semantically positive preverbal adverbs of frequency, on the other hand, occur not only in affirmative statements but also in negative statements in combination with *not* (or *-n't*), as the following examples illustrate:

1. a. Florida often { **isn't**
is not } cold in winter.

b. Florida is often not cold in winter.

c. Florida { **isn't**
is not } often cold in winter.

2. a. Professor Potter usually { **hasn't**
has not } attended faculty meetings.

b. Professor Potter has usually not attended faculty meetings.

c. Professor Potter { **hasn't**
has not } usually attended faculty meetings.

Our current syntactic rules for negation and for PAF placement and movement account for sentences like (1a and b) and (2a and b). In these sentences, the *not* and the PAF are independently placed and moved, if needed. In the case of (1c) and (2c), the *not* appears to be part of a phrasal negative PAF (i.e., *not often*, *not usually*) that has been placed medially and moved to post-operator position. Other phrasal PAFs that are a result of combining with *not* in this way are: *not always*, *not ever*, and *not generally*.

USE OF PREVERBAL ADVERBS OF FREQUENCY

As the analysis of conversational and written corpora in the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* shows, preverbal adverbs of frequency are differently distributed across registers (Biber et al., 1999, p. 796). Those on the extreme ends of the continuum, *always* and

never, are much more frequent in conversational English and fiction than in news or academic prose. For example, *never* occurs 800 times per million words in conversational English and 1,200 times per million words in fiction, whereas in academic prose, its frequency is only about 200 times per million words. In contrast, *usually* and *often* are much more frequent in academic prose than in conversation; in fact, *often* is rarely used in conversation. This last finding parallels our own investigation of preverbal adverbs in 23,000 words of English conversation, in which *often* did not occur even once. One preverbal adverb, *sometimes*, occurs with about equal frequency across registers.

These striking differences across registers (especially between conversation and formal written registers) in the use of some preverbal adverbs of frequency reflects in part the need for writers to “hedge” or qualify statements so as not to overgeneralize. While speakers can overgeneralize or even exaggerate claims in conversation (“*I would never do that!*” “*I always try to get some exercise.*”), writers may be more careful not to do so. English has numerous adverbs that serve to qualify statements, including *generally*, *occasionally*, and *typically* as well as the more common ones previously noted. These uses, then, are related to the epistemic stance adverbials (e.g., *perhaps*, *probably*, *maybe*), which also function to qualify assertions.

Interaction with Tense and Aspect

Praninkas (1975) points out that since preverbal adverbs of frequency are used to express approximately how many times a habitual action or condition is repeated, they are typically not used with the progressive aspect. Instead, simple present tense, present perfect, and simple past (in its habitual sense) tend to co-occur with these adverbs:

Professor Johnson is always busy.

Joe often studied until midnight.

I have never visited Japan.

In fact, we would add that all adverbials of frequency—not just the preverbal adverbs—tend to co-occur with tenses that are used to express habitual action:

Horace goes to the movies once a week.

Alberta drank champagne every now and then.

While we agree in principle with Praninkas’s (1975) generalization, we would, however, point out that the progressive aspect may co-occur with preverbal adverbs of frequency when the speaker’s message carries emotional overtones (see Chapter 7):

Orville is always hearing noises. (i.e., he hallucinates)

Compare this with the less emotional, more objective sentence:

Orville always hears noises. (i.e., he has a keen sense of hearing)

The preverbal adverb of highest frequency (i.e., *always*), also closely resembles certain adverbs that express duration or iteration, although *always* is less emphatic than *continually* or *constantly*:

Sydney is { **always**
continually
constantly } grouchy.

(durative: a continuing state of affairs)

Martha { **always**
continually
constantly } loses things.

(iterative: a series of events)

Sentence-Initial Use of PAFs

Several—though not all—preverbal adverbs of frequency sometimes occur in initial position. What does such initial position signal? Close (1981) suggests that logical contradiction is a likely environment for a sentence-initial preverbal adverb:

A: Peter is always on time.

B: No, Peter isn’t always on time. Sometimes he’s late.

practice using preverbal adverbs in contexts that are as natural as possible. Clearly we need a comprehensive discourse analysis of the use of preverbal adverbs in English speech and writing that will give us some of the information we have about other adverbials.

Conclusion

This chapter has expanded on our brief earlier discussions about adverb phrases, prepositional phrases used adverbially, and adverb clauses. We have shown that these three adverbial structures can occur both sentence-finally and sentence-initially, with different implications for the organization of discourse. We have also included a discussion of participles functioning as adverbials to complement our earlier discussion of participles functioning as adjectives in Chapter 20. In the final section of this chapter, we have introduced preverbal adverbs of frequency (PAFs), an important sub-class of adverbials, which are sentential in scope and which overlap semantically with the quantifiers presented in Chapter 17. All PAFs are placed medially between the subject and the predicate; many of them can also appear sentence-initially where they function to reflect speaker stance, and a few of them can occur sentence-finally.

Adverbials will be the topic of the following two chapters on logical connectors, Chapter 26, and conditionals, Chapter 27. We will encounter adverbials again as a special type of relative clause in Chapter 29 and in the two chapters that deal with degree constructions (Chapters 34 and 35). As we said at the outset of this chapter, adverbials are a large and diffuse category. More is on the way!

Teaching Suggestions

- 1. Form.** Miller (1991) suggests having learners unscramble sentences, putting the adverbials after the verb; each scrambled sentence contains two adverbials for which possible orderings can be discussed (pp. 75–77); for example:
sometimes/John/to the beach/goes
jumped/the cat/into the car/through the window
in the spring/salmon/upstream/swim
Mr. Chaves/from Peru/immigrated/ten years ago
- 2. Form.** To help learners see the relationship between adjectives and adverbs of manner, have them convert sentences with adverbs to sentences with adjectives, and vice versa:
John is a careful worker → John works carefully.
Sheila dances gracefully → Sheila is a graceful dancer.
- 3. Form.** Danielson and Porter (1990) suggest providing students with a text where the adverbials come at the end of each sentence in parentheses in a scrambled order. The students have to rewrite the paragraph inserting the adverbials in appropriate places (p. 195):
San Francisco is cool (in the summer, usually). The skies are overcast, and the fog rolls off the bay to cover the city (in the morning, almost always, completely, often). However, the weather turns warm and sunny (sometimes).
- 4. Meaning.** Thewlis (2007) suggests that students interview a classmate to find out things that he or she does based on adverbial prompts of time, place and manner, such as *every day*, *before bedtime*, *outdoors*, *very well*, or *with considerable difficulty*. The interviewer should write complete sentences about the activities and report them to the class (p. 35).

5. **Meaning.** Sharon Voss (personal communication) suggests that the teacher prepare large flashcards—each with a preverbal adverb of frequency. When each student has a flashcard, the class members must first arrange themselves into a positive group and a negative group. Then, within each of the two groups, they should order themselves from high to low frequency according to the meanings of the preverbal adverbs of frequency on their flashcards. Each student then says an original sentence using his or her preverbal adverb of frequency and, if necessary, receives comments and corrections from peers. The teacher should also get the students to discuss the appropriateness of the sentences containing the preverbal adverbs (e.g., “Would an alternative sound better?”).
6. **Form/Meaning.** Have students work in groups to describe events that surround some notable event such as an earthquake, an election, the Olympics, or the World Cup. Ask them to use preverbal adverbs of frequency to describe the related events. For example:
- An earthquake
 - Some animals always know when an earthquake is going to occur.
 - People sometimes panic during an earthquake.
 - Homes and buildings are often damaged by an earthquake.
7. **Use.** Have students consult a collocations dictionary or online concordance such as the Compleat Lexical Tutor (www.lextutor.ca) or COCA (www.corpus.byu.edu/coca) to learn what circumstance adverbials co-occur frequently with common verbs. The choice of verbs can depend on student levels and learning contexts. Ask them to write down four or five adverbials for each verb. If time permits, they can write sentences or choose several to use in a paragraph. Or to conduct the activity in a shorter time, assign just one word to pairs or groups and ask them to share their findings. Students can also be asked to volunteer verbs to check. For example:
- complain:** bitterly, loudly, constantly, repeatedly
 - laugh:** out loud, heartily, hysterically, nervously, uncontrollably
 - speak:** briefly, quietly, softly, loudly, eloquently
 - study (as in examine):** carefully, closely, in depth, extensively
 - travel:** fast, slowly, regularly, widely, independently
 - work:** steadily, effectively, efficiently, satisfactorily
 - worry:** a lot, slightly, terribly, needlessly, unnecessarily (All examples are from *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English*, Oxford University Press, 2002)
8. **Use.** As a noticing task for helping writers develop an awareness of the importance of hedging in academic writing, Frodesen and Wald (2015) suggest giving students pairs of sentences in which the first sentence does not use a hedging adverb expressing possibility or frequency, but the second one does. Ask students to discuss why the hedges are important, given the information expressed in the sentences. For example:
1. a. Reducing intake of animal fat will lead to better health.
b. Reducing intake of animal fat will potentially lead to better health.
 2. a. An African lion in the wild lives for 16–18 years.
b. An African in the wild typically lives for 16–18 years.

9. **Use.** To practice the stance marker *perhaps* in its patterned usage with superlatives (*perhaps* [one of] *the best/biggest/most* + classifier NP is...), give students a list of phrases with a variety of superlatives and classifier nouns (e.g., *example, experience, problem*). Ask them to choose and complete one or more phrases by writing sentences; then ask them to share their responses with the class for comments and questions. Create phrases that reflect your students' proficiency levels, backgrounds, interests and goals for learning English. This activity could be expanded as an in-class writing or out-of-class assignment by asking students to write a paragraph describing or explaining the sentence they wrote. For example:

- Perhaps one of the most striking differences between my life in my home country and [the country I now live in] is...
- Perhaps the greatest difficulty I have experienced in learning English is...
- Perhaps one of the best examples of traditional Mexican food is ...
- Perhaps the most common stereotype people have of Americans in my home country is...
- Perhaps the biggest problem I had in adjusting to a new country/a new home/college/living in a dormitory...

10. **Use.** To practice using sentential adverbials for expressing attitude and stance, give students a list of three or four statements that would elicit such responses. Ask them to work in pairs or small groups and choose one or more statements to list as many responses as they can. Provide several examples of responses to a statement as models. For example:

Context

The American Cancer Society estimates that at least 20 percent of all cancers as could be prevented by proper diet.

Response(s)

- Perhaps that's an understatement.
- Of course, if you include tobacco part of diet, the percentage goes way up.
- Sometimes I wonder what these numbers are based on.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide original sentences that illustrate the following terms or rules. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples.

a. sentence-initial

- (i.) adverb phrase
- (ii.) prepositional phrase
- (iii.) adverb clause

b. sentence-final

- (i.) adverb phrase
- (ii.) prepositional phrase
- (iii.) adverb clause

c. specific or general adverbial of frequency

- d. preverbal adverb of frequency
 - (i.) positive
 - (ii.) negative
 - e. phrasal preverbal adverb of frequency
 - (i.) positive
 - (ii.) negative
 - f. adverbial participle
2. *Why are the following sentences or dialogues ungrammatical?*
- a. *Is not he ever going to finish his degree?
 - b. *Marvin does often not dance.
 - c. **A:** Are you ever late to class?
B: *I am never.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

3. *If your students produce the following sentences, what norms of Standard English have they not followed, and how would you help them to become aware of them?*
- a. *José can play sometimes handball after work.
 - b. *Rarely we can eat outside in the garden.
 - c. *I speak fluently French.
 - d. *We enjoy going in Boston to seafood restaurants.
 - e. *Crying hysterically, the mother tried to calm the little girl down.
4. *What is the difference in meaning, if any, between the sentences in each of the following pairs?*
- a. Alice uses dental floss. Alice always uses dental floss.
 - b. Sometimes we need to think before we act. We sometimes need to think before we act.
 - c. When I think about Sybil, I get very angry. I get very angry when I think about Sybil.
5. *What, if anything, is inappropriate with the responses to these two questions? What is the explanation for any problem you detect?*
- a. **A:** How often do you go to the beach?
B: Usually.
 - b. **A:** Have you ever been to Europe?
B: Sometimes.
6. *A student asks you if there is any difference between these two sentences, and if so, when he should use one form rather than the other. What will you say?*
- a. I have always told the truth.
 - b. I always *have* told the truth.
7. *A student asks you which of these two sentences is correct. What will you say?*
- a. I watch the news at 10 P.M. every day.
 - b. I watch the news every day at 10 P.M.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For useful overviews of linguistic and grammatical analysis of adverbials, see:

- Buyschaert, J. (1982). *Criteria for the classification of English adverbials*. Brussels, Belgium: Paleis der Academiën.
- Ernst, T. B. (1984). *Towards an integrated theory of adverb position in English*. Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Linguistics Club.
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For useful information on usage, see:

- Ford, C. E. (1993). *Grammar in interaction: Adverbial clauses in American English conversation*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
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For research that investigates stance adverbials across academic genres and disciplines, see:

- Hyland, K. (2004). *Disciplinary discourses: Social interaction in academic writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Hyland, K. & C. S. Guinda (Eds.). (2012). *Stance and voice in written academic genres*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

For information on negative preverbal adverbs of frequency, see:

- Klima, E. (1964). Negation in English. In J. Fodor & J. Katz (Eds.). *The structure of language* (pp. 246–323). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

For explanations and exercises for learners on adverbial phrases and clauses and also on using adverbs and aspect to indicate time relationships, see:

- Thewlis, S. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 3* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For a content-based lesson on adverbs of frequency, see:

- Firsten, R. (2008). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 2*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For explanations and activities focused on adverb clauses in advanced grammar and writing, see:

- Bland, S. K. (with Savage, A., & Meyers, P.). (2008). *Grammar sense: Advanced grammar and writing 4*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

For explanations and activities using stance adverbials in academic writing, see:

- Frodesen, J., & Wald, M. (2015). *Exploring options: Vocabulary and grammar for academic writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

For a discussion of adverbs frequently used in academic writing, see:

- Hinkel, E. (2004). *Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Endnotes

1. The term *preverbal adverb of frequency* comes from the work of Klima (1964).
2. All the \emptyset symbols represent obligatorily or optionally deleted prepositions of the types described in Chapter 21.
3. This is an equative degree clause functioning adverbially (see Chapter 35), not the usual subordinate adverb clause consisting of an adverb subordinator followed by a full sentence.
4. Recall that *because of* is a complex preposition of the type described and diagrammed in Chapter 21.
5. Note that this is a nonfinite adverb clause, different from the usual adverb clause (an adverb subordinator followed by a full finite sentence). Jacobs (1995) points out that nonfinite subordinate clauses often lack an overt subordinator (p. 67): *She locked the door (so as) to prevent any more intrusions.*
6. The other major syntactic means of introducing speaker stance and attitude toward propositions in English are via modals/phrasal modals, *You may be right* and via the short introductory clauses that can precede noun clause complements: *It's possible he was injured; I think you're right.* (See Chapter 31.)
7. This includes "frequency," which we treat in our discussion of preverbal adverbs of frequency.
8. Biber et al. present a number of subcategories for epistemic, such as doubt/certainty, actuality, and imprecision.
9. The Compleat Lexical Tutor (www.lextutor.ca), developed by Tom Cobb, is a website with, among other vocabulary learning resources, a concordancer for investigating patterns of words and phrases in a number of written and spoken corpora, both American and British English.
10. We have not provided phrase structure descriptions for many general and specific adverbials of frequency, such as *once a week, once in a while*, and, *every now and then*, because their analysis is simply too complicated to be worth doing.
11. Note that whereas adverbials of specific or general frequency tend to be phrases (with exceptions such as *weekly, yearly, daily, hourly*), preverbal adverbs of frequency tend to be single words, although they may take adverbs and thereby form adverbial phrases (e.g., *very often* or *almost always*). Sometimes both types of adverbs of frequency occur in statements of habitual action, e.g., *I usually do my laundry once a week*. When this happens, the preverbal adverb is modifying the specific adverbial of frequency; in other words, preverbal adverbs of frequency modify the entire sentence—they do for the sentence what quantifiers do for the noun phrase—whereas general or specific adverbials of frequency modify the activity expressed in the verb phrase.

There are also some prepositional phrases semantically similar to the preverbal adverbs *generally* and *usually* that typically occur in initial position:

**{ As a rule,
In general, }** Sara walks her dog after dinner.

12. Note that in this example, the auxiliary verb *do* has been added via *do* support to carry the emphatic stress as well as the tense. For further discussion of this function of *do*, see Chapter 30. Also, with emphatic *do* as operator, there is one other possible ordering in strong agreement rejoinders that the rules do not predict: Yes, she *does* always do that!
13. For some reason, *often* is more awkward than these other adverbs when used sentence-initially (?Often Mary jogs in the morning) even though it is in the same semantic category. The somewhat archaic equivalent form *oftentimes* seems to work better in initial position than *often*.
14. Negative preverbal adverbs are not the only negative forms that cause subject/operator inversion when fronted. Most, if not all, negative constituents have this effect in English:
Not since the tsunami has such destruction been seen.
15. Note that not all sentences containing *never, rarely*, etc., may undergo this change of word order. The speaker or writer typically must be expressing an exclamation of sorts; if not, the fronting of the negative PAF and the inversion are strange:

John has never traveled abroad. ?Never has John traveled abroad.

16. *Ever* can function on its own as a PAF in questions and after *not/n't*.
17. *Ever* is not listed on the semantic continua for preverbal adverbs of frequency because it is midway between the positive and negative lexical items. It occurs mainly in questions or negatives or as a part of phrasal combinations with *not*, *hardly*, or *scarcely*.
18. This impossible combination may be due to the fact that historically *never* is a lexicalized form of *not + ever*.

Introduction

In Chapter 24 we described coordinating conjunctions (e.g., *and*, *but*, *so*), which conjoin two or more like constituents and lead the listener/reader to interpret how these constituents are related to each other. Chapter 25, gave an overview of adverbials. In this chapter, we focus more specifically on two types of adverbials, which we call *logical connectors*. Logical connectors signal how segments of discourse are logically related to each other. For instance, they may signal causal, sequential, or contrastive relationships. There are two types of logical connectors:

1. *Adverb subordinators*

Adverb subordinators, such as *although*, *because* and *whereas*, identify relationships between the subordinate clauses they mark and main clauses in sentences:

Although the black clouds looked threatening, no rain was predicted.

2. *Linking adverbs*

Linking adverbs comprise a larger group of expressions than that for adverb subordinators. They include words and phrases such as *however*, *therefore*, *for example*, and *in addition*, and are used to signal relationships between independent clauses that in written English are punctuated as separate sentences or joined by a semi-colon:

The black clouds looked threatening; however, no rain was predicted.

From these two examples, we can see that adverb subordinators and linking adverbs are similar in the meanings that they signal between clauses and sentences. And from these examples, it is also apparent that some adverb subordinators and linking adverbs specify the same kinds of relationships that coordinating conjunctions do;¹ in this case, the conjunction would be *but*:

The black clouds looked threatening, but no rain was predicted.

With so few members, the logical meanings that coordinating conjunctions express are quite limited. Subordinating conjunctions and linking adverbs, in contrast, signal a wider range of meanings.

Logical connectors in ESL/EFL teaching contexts get significant attention, especially at more advanced levels, and in the teaching of writing. But even at beginning levels, speakers and writers need to learn and practice logical connectors commonly used in everyday English.

Among the most important issues that arise in the teaching and learning of logical connectors, and which will be covered in this chapter, are the following:

1. How do the connector types differ in the kinds of constructions they connect?
2. What types of punctuation are used in written English with the connector types?
3. How do the connector types differ in the meanings they signal between parts of text?
4. How do the uses of connectors differ across speech and writing and within different registers of these modes (e.g., journalism versus academic writing)?
5. Which logical connectors deserve the most focus in language teaching based on their frequency in speech and/or writing?

Common problems that ESL/EFL learners have with the forms, meanings, and uses of connectors are as follows:

- Using a connector that does not have the appropriate meaning for the context:
The golden eagle is a large bird, with a wingspan of over 8 feet.
***On the contrary, some hummingbirds are not much bigger than large insects.**
- Using a connector with an inappropriate level of formality (either more formal or less):
I had a bad cold on Sunday. *Hence, I couldn't go swimming.
- Using incorrect punctuation for a connector:
***The road was closed, as a result, we had to take a detour.**

In addition to these common problems is that of unclear reference of connectors in extended pieces of writing. For example, when a writer uses a connector such as *therefore* to signal a result or *however* to signal a contrast, a reader may have difficulty determining how much of the previous text should be considered as part of the logical relationship. (This, of course, is a problem that native English writers may have as well.) As ESL/EFL learners develop their proficiency in academic writing, they may also tend to overuse connectors.

This chapter, then, will describe the shared and different meanings of adverb subordinators and linking adverbs, the ways in which these two connector groups differ in form and use, and aspects of their teaching that deserve special attention in ESL/EFL contexts.

The Form of Logical Connectors

CLAUSES WITH ADVERB SUBORDINATORS

We have already encountered in this book what traditional grammarians have called *subordinating conjunctions*. We have referred to them as *adverb subordinators* because they subordinate one clause to another, and they have the force of an adverbial. We first introduced them in Chapter 6, where we saw that one of the grammatical forms that adverbials take in English is clausal (rule 13), and that adverb clauses are in turn composed of sentences that are introduced by adverb subordinators (rule 14).

$$13. \text{ ADVL} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{AdvCl} \\ \text{AdvP} \\ \text{PrepP} \end{array} \right\}$$

$$14. \text{ AdvCl} \rightarrow \text{adv sub S}$$

Simple Adverb Subordinators

A list of simple adverb subordinators includes the following:

| | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|
| after | before | since | when(ever) |
| although | if | though | where(ver) |
| as | lest | until | whereas |
| because | once | unless | while |

We should point out immediately that many of the words listed here also fit other part-of-speech categories, in which they would not be called *adverb subordinators*. You have seen how *where* and *when*, for instance, function as *wh*-question words (Chapter 13). In addition, some words that serve as adverb subordinators before clauses function as prepositions when they are followed by a noun phrase. This is especially true for those expressing time relationships, such as *after*, *before*, *since*, and *until*:

adv sub: **Before/After the play ended, many patrons were crying.**

prep: **Before/After the play, we had coffee.**

adv sub: **Since you talked to me about it, I've become convinced.**

prep: **Since Monday, it has been terribly hot.**

adv sub: **Until it cools off, I am not doing any yardwork.**

prep: **We will not have our next class until the end of the week.**

Notice that what distinguishes these uses is what comes after the adv sub or prep. If it is an adv sub, it will be followed by a clause; as a prep, it is followed by an NP.²

An additional possible point of confusion concerns the word *as*. This word falls into the class of subordinators provided that it is used in the causal sense of *since*, as below:

She left soon as she saw no reason to remain.

As is also a preposition, and is used extensively in equatives (Chapter 34).

Complex Adverb Subordinators

To the list of simple adverb subordinators, we add certain other expressions, sometimes called *lexicalized units*, that can precede a subordinate clause:

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| as long as | inasmuch as | now that |
| as soon as | in case (that) | provided that |
| even if | in order that | so long as |
| even though | insofar as | so that |
| given that | in that | |

Like the simple adverb subordinators, clauses beginning with complex adverb subordinators can appear in various positions in the sentence:

final: **You can stay with us as long as you bring your own bedding.**

initial: **As long as you bring your own bedding, you can stay with us.**

final: **Bring an umbrella in case it rains.**

initial: **In case it rains, bring an umbrella.**

Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) point out that some of the complex adverb subordinators occur regularly in patterns with other words or phrases. They call these groups of words “lexical bundles” (p. 1011). A few examples that are common in conversation are the following:

As far as I know, he arrived this morning.

As long as you don't mind, I'll drive.

As soon as you can, give me a call.

Among the most important issues that arise in the teaching and learning of logical connectors, and which will be covered in this chapter, are the following:

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| as soon as | in case (that) | provided that |
| even if | in order that | so long as |
| even though | insofar as | so that |
| given that | in that | |

Like the simple adverb subordinators, clauses beginning with complex adverb subordinators can appear in various positions in the sentence:

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As far as I know, he arrived this morning.

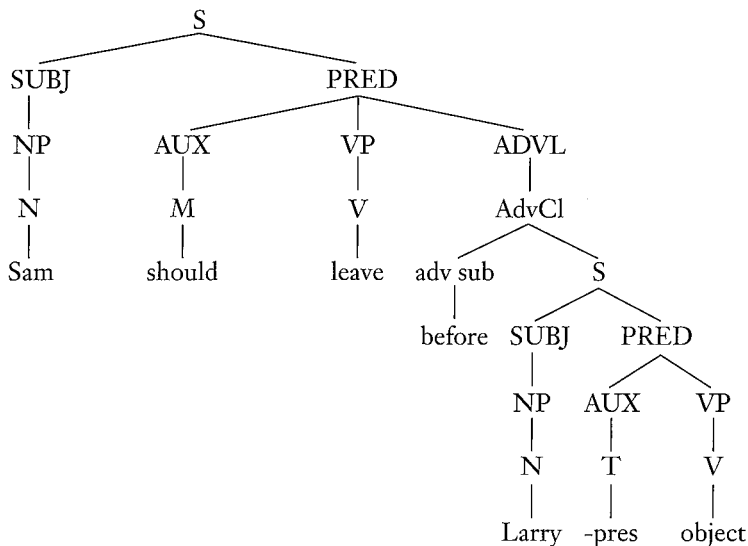
As long as you don't mind, I'll drive.

As soon as you can, give me a call.

The Syntax of Sentences with Adverb Clauses

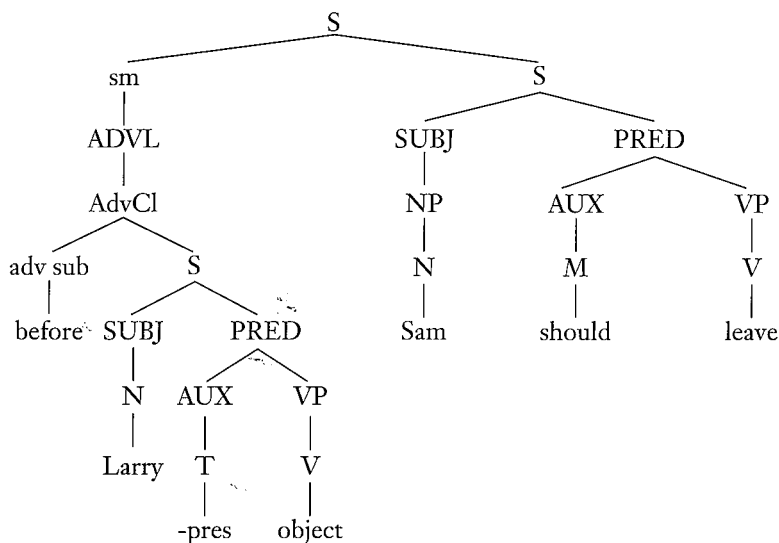
When the adverb subordinator + subordinate clause appears in final position in the sentence, the tree looks like the following:

Sam should leave before Larry objects.



When the adverb clause appears at the beginning of the sentence, the adverb clause is considered a sentence modifier, as you saw in the previous chapter. The reasons for the different architecture between sentence-initial and sentence-final position are discussed later in this chapter, in the section on using logical connectors.

Before Larry objects, Sam should leave.



It is somewhat more difficult for adverb clauses to appear medially; when they do so appear, they are typically separated in speech by heavy pauses:

final: **You can see as far as Orcas Island *when the sky is clear*.**

initial: ***When the sky is clear*, you can see as far as Orcas Island.**

medial: **You can, *when the sky is clear*, see as far as Orcas Island.**

Note again a parallel with other adverbial options, here a prepositional phrase:

final: **We plan to take the trip *during the summer*.**

initial: ***During the summer*, we plan to take the trip.**

medial: **We plan, *during the summer*, to take the trip.**

Thus, we see once again that adverbials as a whole are unusually free in their placement options in comparison with other constituents.

LINKING ADVERBS

Linking adverbs (sometimes called conjunctive adverbs), unlike adverb subordinators, do not subordinate a clause; rather, they connect independent clauses.

Sam should leave; *however*, Larry will object.

The inventory of English linking adverbs is considerably larger than that of adverb subordinators. A fairly complete list is given here. Some are individual words, and some qualify as lexicalized units:

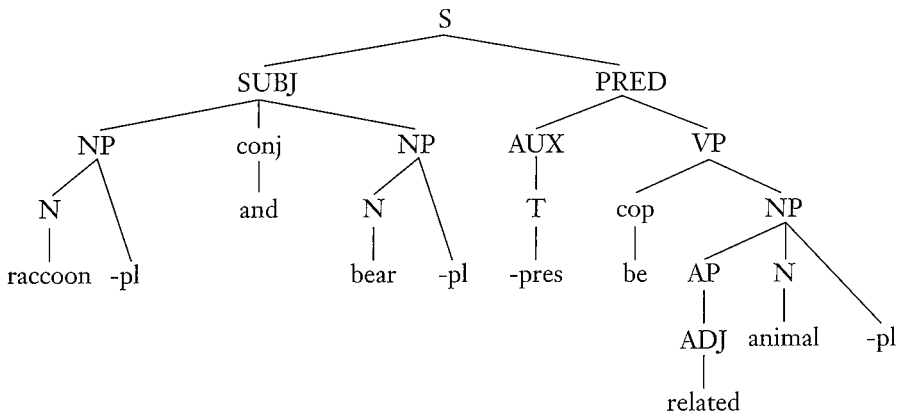
| | | |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| additionally | hence | moreover |
| after all | however | nevertheless |
| also | in addition | next |
| alternatively | in any case/event | on the contrary |
| as a result | indeed | on the one/other hand |
| as a consequence | in contrast | otherwise |
| besides | in fact | rather |
| by contrast | in other words | similarly |
| consequently | in particular | still |
| conversely | in spite of that | that is |
| despite that | in sum | therefore |
| first(ly) . . . second(ly) . . . finally | in turn | thus |
| for example/instance | last(ly) | |
| furthermore | likewise | |

Like other adverbials, most of these linking adverbs are capable of appearing in different places in a clause; they may be found at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the independent clauses with which they occur. (We discuss the punctuation of sentences with logical connectors next.)

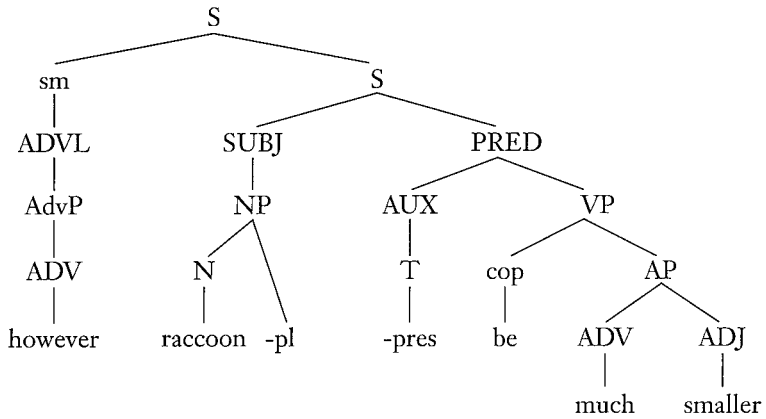
Raccoons and bears are related animals. { **However, raccoons are much smaller.**
Raccoons are much smaller, however.
Raccoons, however, are much smaller.

Because these adverbs relate independent clauses, they are represented as two separate trees—one for the first sentence (without the adverb) and one for the second (with the adverb).³ Following the first tree are three trees that illustrate the variable positioning of *however* in the second sentence:

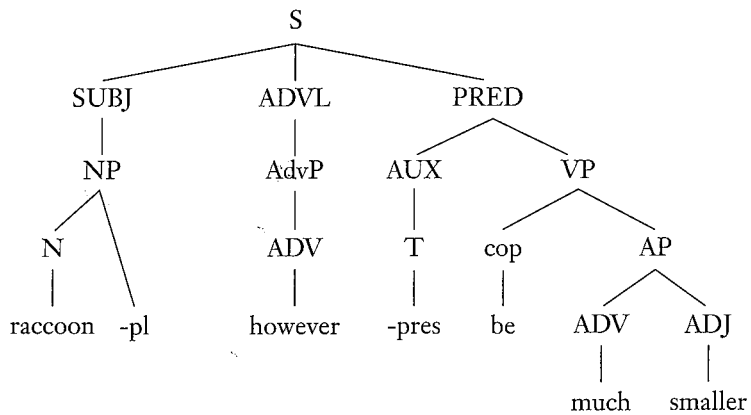
Raccoons and bears are related animals.



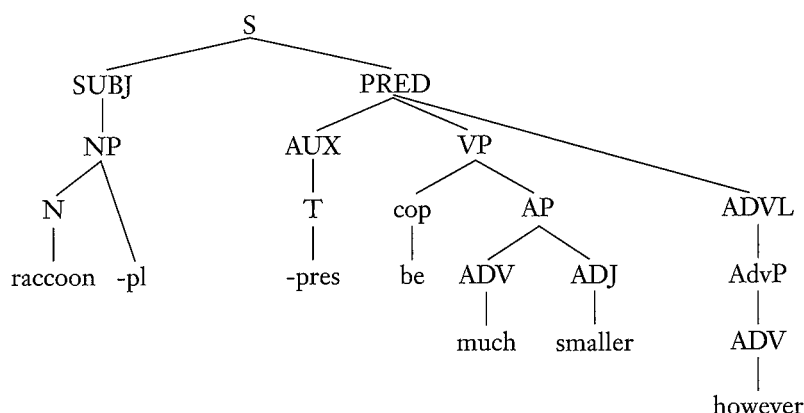
However, raccoons are much smaller.



Raccoons, however, are much smaller.



Raccoons are much smaller, however.



It is also possible for linking adverbs to follow coordinating conjunctions and to relate grammatical categories other than an independent clause, such as a noun phrase or a verb phrase:

This is a possum and therefore a marsupial. (NP and therefore NP)

You can raise the car or, alternatively, lower it to remove the engine. (VP or alternatively VP)

She is on the one hand very helpful and on the other hand completely untrustworthy.
(AP and on the other hand AP)

When occurring with coordinating conjunctions, linking adverbs serve to join like constituents.

PUNCTUATION OF SENTENCES WITH LOGICAL CONNECTORS

Punctuation conventions play an important role in the teaching of logical connector forms for writing. This is true for teaching English speakers as well as ESL/EFL learners; most writing classes other than for very young learners give attention to where commas, periods, or semicolons are used with connectors and the clauses they connect. As with punctuation rules for other structures, such as prepositional phrases or noun phrases in a series, there is not always complete agreement as to when punctuation is necessary or optional, especially in the case of commas.

The punctuation of sentences with logical connectors, including coordinating conjunctions, adverb subordinators, and linking adverbs, can be even more challenging for ESL/EFL learners than for native English speakers for several reasons:

- Because the three classes of connectors are functionally so similar, students may consider them grammatically equivalent as well. As one example, ESL/EFL learners sometimes confuse the adverb subordinator *although* with the linking adverb *however* and use *although* followed by a comma to signal a contrastive sentence:

I wanted to take an economics class winter term. *Although, I need to take a statistics course first.

Note that in this case, *although* without a comma would begin an adverb clause sentence fragment that actually should be joined to the preceding clause.

- Not all languages distinguish the three classes of connectors in the way that English does. For some that have more than one class, there is a different correspondence between meaning and class than that which exists in English. Japanese, for example,

has a single word that translates as “because,” which may begin a clause that is freestanding both orthographically and intonationally. L1 Japanese students may, as a result, create sentence fragments with *because*-clauses when writing in English:

I wanted to see all the Harry Potter films. *Because I had read every book in the series.

Similarly, not all languages that have commas use them in quite the same way that English does; ESL/EFL learners may transfer their punctuation rules to their written English.

- Many of the linking adverbs such as *in addition*, *nevertheless*, and *consequently* are rarely used in conversational English; as a result, intonational cues as to where one might put commas or other punctuation are not available to learners. In other words, asking a learner to read a piece of writing out loud in order to add or delete punctuation might not be a successful editing strategy.

The next sections will summarize the punctuation rules for the three types of connectors. We will use the following words, which all signal contrast, as our first examples:

coordinating conjunction: **but**

adverb subordinator: **although**

linking adverb: **however**

Punctuation with Coordinating Conjunctions

The general rule in writing handbooks for punctuating two clauses in a sentence joined by a coordinating conjunction is to use a comma after the first clause:

They had just arrived at their vacation retreat, but already they wanted to leave.

If, however, the clauses are quite short, and ideas can be easily comprehended without the aid of punctuation, a comma is not considered necessary:

They had just arrived and dinner was served.

Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) report that English speakers tend to be more accepting of no punctuation when *and* rather than *but* is the coordinating conjunction.

Coordinators can also begin a clause that is a sentence by itself.

They had just arrived. But they wanted to leave when they learned that heavy rain was expected for the entire week.

Students are sometimes instructed not to start sentences with coordinating conjunctions; the intention may be to encourage students to use linking adverbs as more register-appropriate signals (e.g., to use *however* rather than *but*). Nevertheless, coordinating conjunctions are used sentence initially in written English as any investigation of corpus data will reveal. Quirk et al. point out that independent sentences are more frequently introduced by *but* than by *and*.

Punctuation with Adverb Subordinators

With subordination, punctuation depends on whether the subordinate clause comes before or after the main clause. If the subordinate clause comes first, a comma is placed at the end to separate it from the main clause:

Even though she tried every means possible, she could not steer the boat out of the storm.

Usually no comma is used when the subordinate clause follows the main clause:

She could not steer the boat out of the storm even though she tried every means possible.

While the “no comma” rule for sentence-final subordinate clauses is typically taught to student writers, in fact commas sometimes follow the main clauses that precede subordinate clauses in academic English when the adverb subordinator signals a contrast, as we mentioned in the previous chapter, and as in this example from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA):

New York State has personal finance standards in high school, although the standards are not required to be implemented. (*College Student Journal*, March 2011, 45.1)

To some extent, punctuation may be determined by the length of the subordinate clause, with shorter clauses tending not to be punctuated.⁴

As noted earlier, a subordinate clause cannot be separated from the main clause in formal written English regardless of whether it comes before or after the main clause. To do so creates the writing error known as a *sentence fragment* as in these examples:

***She could not steer the boat out of the storm. Even though she tried every means possible.**⁵

***Even though she tried every means possible. She could not steer the boat out of the storm.**

And if we look at transcribed spoken data in corpus data, commas mark intonational pauses before sentence-final subordinate clauses, which are afterthoughts, as in this example from COCA discussing an increase of jumbo squid in California coastal waters:

Well, I don't think there's a danger to swimmers, although that's a huge big news thing that makes the news about every year or so. (*NPR Science*, 2010 100212)

From the large amount of data now available through corpus analyses, it becomes clear that the prescriptive rules have more exceptions than we may have thought; thus, ESL/EFL learners may need to be aware that some of the rules given in textbooks are only general guidelines.

Punctuation with Linking Adverbs

As most teachers of written English find, students tend to have problems in punctuating clauses joined by linking adverbs, and this is sometimes the case for speakers of English as well as ESL/EFL learners. The following chart summarizes the most common rules:

| <i>Punctuation Rules with Linking Adverbs</i> | <i>Examples</i> |
|---|---|
| <p>When two clauses are connected by a linking adverb, there are two options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A period can be used to create two separate sentences. 2) Two clauses can be connected by a semicolon to emphasize that the ideas are logically related.⁶ <p>With both options, a comma is used after the linking adverb</p> | <p>She tried every means possible. <i>However</i>, she could not steer the boat out of the storm.</p> <p>She tried every means possible; <i>however</i>, she could not steer the boat out of the storm.</p> |
| <p>Clauses connected by linking adverbs cannot be separated with only a comma. This common writing error is known as a <i>comma splice</i> or sometimes a <i>run-on sentence</i>.</p> | <p>*She tried every means possible, <i>however</i>, she could not steer the boat out of the storm.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| When some linking adverbs are sentence-medial, they are marked with commas both before and after. | She tried every means possible. She could not, <i>however</i> , steer the boat out of the storm. Her experience at sea was very frightening. She was not, <i>as a result</i> , eager to pilot a boat again. |
| Other linking adverbs, such as <i>also</i> and <i>thus</i> , do not need to be punctuated when they are sentence-medial. Many writers do not put a comma after an initial <i>thus</i> either. | She tried every means possible to steer the boat. Her friend <i>also</i> tried. |
| Some linking adverbs can be placed at the end of the sentence, in which case a comma is not needed. | She decided not to try to pilot a boat again. She still enjoys sailing with others <i>however</i> . |

Because of the high frequency of linking adverbs in written English, especially academic writing, teachers can easily provide opportunities for students to notice punctuation conventions and summarize the rules that govern their use.

OTHER FORM PROBLEMS WITH LOGICAL CONNECTORS

There are a few issues of form specific to individual logical connectors that arise for ESL/EFL students.

Because versus Because Of. Students often confuse the adverb subordinator *because* with the prepositional construction *because of*. While semantically and functionally similar, these two forms are syntactically distinct. Most often students follow *because of*, which requires a noun phrase object, with a full clause, as in the following sentence.

***We were late because of we had car problems.**

As a Result versus As a Result Of. Similarly, ESL/EFL students sometimes confuse the adverb subordinator *as a result* and *as a result of* in sentences like:

***As a result of I had a bad car accident, I missed several weeks of school.**

Due To versus On Account Of. Then, too, often the synonymous prepositional constructions *due to* and *on account of* are mistakenly used by learners as adverb subordinators, as in the sentence

***I couldn't finish my homework due to it was too hard.**

For Example versus Such As. Another common area of confusion concerns the semantically similar expressions *for example* and *such as*. The former functions as a linking adverb, while the latter functions as a complex preposition:

We like beaches that have good surf. For example, we like Hapuna and Rincon.

We like beaches that have good surf. *Such as, we like Hapuna and Rincon.

Such as is best presented as a prepositional construction: in normal use, it is most often followed by a noun, not by a full clause:

We like beaches that have good surf such as Hapuna and Rincon.

For example, as a linking adverb, may semantically connect constituents smaller than full clauses, including nouns. However, when it is used in this way, it is most often set off from the main clause by a dash or a colon:

We like beaches that have good surf—for example, Hapuna and Rincon.

We like beaches that have good surf: Hapuna and Rincon, for example.

During versus While. Finally, let us mention the confusion that occurs between *while*, an adverb subordinator, and *during*, which acts as a preposition.

***During I was making the dinner, the phone rang.**

While I was making dinner, the phone rang.

Semantically speaking, the ideas expressed by *while* and *during* are the same. However, *during* can appear only before noun phrases:

During the course of the day, four meals were served.

During 1999, I was working in Europe.

While cannot appear before noun phrases.

***While 1999, I was working in Europe.**

Teachers will find that students are confused with all of these functionally similar but syntactically distinct expressions. To the extent that a teacher wishes to draw attention to them, they may merit classroom treatment on a case-by-case basis.

The Meaning and Use of Logical Connectors

TRUTH CONDITIONAL VERSUS INFERENCE

Much of what was said in Chapter 24 about the meaning and use of coordinating conjunctions applies equally to logical connectors. Though we would like to say that logical connectors all have “meanings” in just the same way as other words and expressions and sentences have meanings, an examination of a large percentage of the connectors soon reveals that they “mean something” much different from the common truth-conditional sense used in most semantic analyses. To see how this is so, we will look first at the cases where the meanings are quite clear—in the cases of expressions that mark temporal (time) relationships (*before*, *after*, *until*, *when*), place relationships (*where*), or causal relationships (*because*, *consequently*). The distinction can be illustrated with two examples. Here is the first:

Julius Caesar’s career was finished long before Napoleon rose to power in France.

If the adverb subordinator *before* is replaced with *after*, the resulting sentence is simply false. The words *before/after* contribute something to the truth or falsehood of the sentence; one can respond to the sentence with *after*, “That’s not true! Napoleon lived almost two millennia after Caesar!” This illustrates that explicit temporal logical connectors, like *before* and *after*, contribute something to the main propositional content of the sentences with which they are associated. The same can be said where place subordinators and causal subordinators are used.

However, not all connectors contribute to propositional content in this way. Compare the following sequence with the previous one:

Caesar was a strong Roman leader; ?thus, Napoleon powerfully ruled France.

We cannot say that this sequence says anything false, but we can say that something seems wrong in the way that the word *thus* is used. We are asked to infer a certain connection between the sentences that does not make sense at all. To understand exactly what the problem is, let us first ask what purpose inferential connectors serve in discourse.

The need for inferential logical connectors is in some ways parallel to the need for coordinating conjunctions like *and*, as we discussed in Chapter 24. It may be illustrated by looking at the following pair of adjacent sentences, taken from Blakemore (1992, p. 136):

Barbara isn't in town. David isn't here.

Why would a speaker set these sentences side by side? What has been said prior to the utterance, or what both speaker and listener already share as background knowledge may make the reason clear. But contexts may not always be available or obvious enough to make intentions transparent. For this reason, in Blakemore's view, languages tend to create expressions whose primary purpose is to clarify these intentions. In English, these sentences might be joined with separate connectors, each of which makes the speaker's intention much clearer:

- a. Barbara isn't in town. Thus, David isn't here.**
- b. Barbara isn't in town. After all, David isn't here.**
- c. Barbara isn't in town. Moreover, David isn't here.**

It is certainly possible for the speaker to achieve the same effects in periphrastic ways. For example, we could say in the (a) and (b) cases,

David isn't here. The reason I know that is that Barbara isn't in town.

Barbara isn't in town. The reason should be clear to you: it's because David isn't here.

However, connectors enable us to achieve the same effects more economically. It goes without saying that speaker intentions can easily be lost, or badly misunderstood, if no connector is used or if the wrong connector is used. In reading, where there are no paralinguistic cues (e.g., tone of voice) or extralinguistic cues (e.g., gestures) to aid the reader in comprehension, writer intentions may be missed even more easily without proper connector use. As with some uses of conjunctions, the proper use of connectors plays a vital role in leading readers/listeners to accurate inferences about the writer's/speaker's intentions. We therefore say that there are two types of connectors:

- a. Truth-conditional connectors like *before/after*, which contribute to propositional content and the truth-falsity of the sequences in which they occur**
- b. Inferential connectors like *thus* and *therefore*, which do not contribute to truth or falsity but which do clarify the logical relationship the speaker/writer intends**

In particular, it is the inferential connectors that ESL/EFL students will need guidance in interpreting and using. We will call special attention to these in the discussion that follows.

THE MEANINGS AND USES OF ADVERB CLAUSES

As we discussed in Chapter 25, there are differences across languages in the uses of adverb clauses. However, according to Thompson and Longacre (1985), all languages seem to have some means to use clauses to modify other clauses in a way consistent with English adverb clauses. The authors further claim that the types of clausal connectors come from a relatively small set most of which are truth-conditional:

Time: **after, as long as, as soon as, before, since, when, whenever, until**

Location: **where, wherever**

Manner: **as (e.g., Do that as your brother does it.), in that**

Purpose: **so that, in order that**

Reason: **since, because, as (e.g., He left, as it was late.), inasmuch as, now that**

Time: **after, as long as, ...**

Simultaneous: **while (e.g., While she sang, he played.), as (e.g., As I was leaving, I saw her.)**

Conditional: **if, even if, as long as, in case, provided that**

Concessive: **although, even though, though, while**

Substitutive: —

Additive: —

Absolutive: —

Those types that have no adverb subordinators associated with them are expressed by other means in English. Substitutives are expressed by the complex prepositions *instead of* and *rather than*, as well as by the linking adverb *rather*. Additives in English are marked with coordinating conjunctions (*and*) and linking adverbs (e.g., *in addition, moreover, furthermore*), and absolutives come into English as participial constructions, already discussed in Chapter 25.

The meanings of most of these expressions are rather straightforward, and most ESL/EFL students have little difficulty with them. The Concessive and Reason types, however, do merit some discussion here.

Concessives

The concessives—*although, even though, though, and while*—fall within the class of inferential connectors. A concession is a special variety of contrast where the sense conveyed is “Yes, but ...”: where concession occurs, the speaker/writer wishes to grant the truth of one proposition while asserting the truth of another proposition in such a way as to make the first proposition seem of lesser importance:

Even though that is a good restaurant, I still think we should try this one.

Although she has done good paintings, she is not a real artist.

While *but* might be used to substitute for the subordinator in either one of these sentences, neither *although* nor *even though* is appropriate simply to mark semantic contrasts in the way that *but* often is used:

New York is huge, but my hometown is small.

?Although New York is huge, my hometown is small.

The use of concessive expressions involves a functional sort of contrast; the information in the main clause is normally intended as the primary focus, and it is the concessive expression that draws the reader/listener to that inference.

Reason

The word *because*, placed in the Reason category, is used in two distinct ways that are often distinguishable in speech by intonation patterns and in writing by punctuation conventions. The more common of the two meanings clearly contributes to truth-conditions in specifying a cause; there is no intonation drop until the end of the complete sentence:

a. My friend was fired because he didn't come to work on time.

b. The poplar tree died because it was attacked by a disease.

The idea in sentence (a) is that being late led to the dismissal; similarly, the idea in (b) is that the disease caused the tree to die.

Used in a different, more colloquial, sense, *because* is an inferential connector that signals warrant for a particular belief. When the word is intended in this sense and when the main clause comes first, the main clause is sometimes followed by a comma in print, reflecting a complete sentence intonation contour in the main clause and another in the second:

c. My friend was probably fired, because I don't see him anywhere.

d. I think this is a poplar tree, because the leaves are pointed at the top.

In sentence (c), the speaker is saying that his/her inability to find the friend constitutes evidence for the belief that the friend has been fired; in (d), the speaker is justifying his/her belief that the tree is a poplar. In neither case is causation being asserted, unlike in the previous examples (a) and (b).

SEQUENCING ADVERB CLAUSES IN A SENTENCE: DISCOURSE LINKS

Another issue of use has to do with the placement of an adverb subordinate clause within a sentence. As we mentioned in the section on the form of adverb clauses, these clauses generally appear either before or after the main clause, although they can also appear clause medially. One may ask whether there is a difference in overall effect if the clause is placed in one position rather than another. What determines which order below will be chosen?

Main clause + subordinate clause:

He always brought flowers when he visited.

Subordinate clause + main clause:

When he visited, he always brought flowers.

There is a strong tendency, according to Ramsay (1987), for initial subordinate clauses to be thematically linked with the material that has come before in the discourse, while subordinate clauses in second position seem to be more closely linked with their main clauses (see the discussion of *theme-rheme* in Chapter 2). This is our justification for treating sentence-final subordinate clauses as we would any other adverbials, but classifying a sentence-initial adverb clause as a sentence modifier. It is a sentence modifier in that it acts as a “discourse pivot,” establishing links between what has come before the sentence and the main clause of the sentence it is in. To take a simple constructed example:

The rivers dried up during the drought. Because there was so little water, the city imposed a water rationing program. It worked rather well.

To reverse the order of the two clauses in the second sentence if used in the context of the first sentence would result in a less coherent text.

THE MEANINGS AND USES OF LINKING ADVERBS

Linking adverbs have typically been classified according to the semantic functions they serve in signaling logical relationships between segments of discourse. The classification we offer here is a simplified version of Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) framework. As Liu (2008) pointed out in his corpus study of linking adverbs across different registers, this classification (outlined in the previous edition of this book, i.e., Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999), has been widely used in other corpus research on linking adverbs, including those comparing usage between native and non-native English speakers in specific registers and genres such as student essays and research papers. It has been expanded here somewhat, based on Chen (2006) and Liu (2008).⁷

| Category | Core Meanings | Types and Examples |
|----------|------------------------------------|---|
| Additive | addition, introduction, similarity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simple: <i>in addition, also, too, furthermore, moreover, and</i> • emphatic: <i>at the same time, besides, as well, what is more</i> • appositive: <i>that is, in other words, for instance/example</i> • comparative: <i>likewise, similarly</i> |

| | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| Adversative | contrary to expectations, contradiction, concession | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concessive: <i>however, nevertheless, despite this, in contrast</i> • contrastive: <i>in fact, actually, however, on the other hand, at the same time</i> • correction: <i>instead, rather, on the contrary, at least</i> • dismissal: <i>in any case, anyhow, anyway, at any rate</i> |
| Causal | true causes, logical relationships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resultative: <i>therefore, as a result, consequently, hence, for this reason, thus, accordingly</i> • causal conditions: <i>then, in that case, otherwise, in turn</i> |
| Sequential | real-time relationships, sequence in text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listing: <i>then, next, eventually, first, second, last, finally, up to now</i> • simultaneous: <i>meanwhile, in the meantime</i> • summative: <i>all in all, in short, to sum up, in conclusion</i> • transitional: <i>by the way, incidentally</i> |

For teachers, frameworks such as the one we present here provide an overview of the broad categories of connectors, the general meanings they signal between parts of text, and examples of some of the most frequent linking adverbs that belong to each category and subcategory. However, as researchers and teachers have pointed out (Crewe, 1990; Conrad, 2004), textbooks and websites for English learners often present lists of linking adverb categories and examples without distinguishing the differences in the meanings and uses they have in real discourse. Such materials produced for classroom teaching or self-study can have the unfortunate result of leading learners to think that lexical items in a subcategory are interchangeable. This is clearly not the case, as we can see from the following sentences using three different concessive linking adverbs:

Calvin wanted to fly to the moon. *However*, he did not know how.

Calvin wanted to fly to the moon. ??*Nevertheless*, he did not know how.

Calvin wanted to fly to the moon. ??*Despite this*, he did not know how.

Another challenge for learners related to the meanings of linking adverbs is that a number of expressions can be used to signal different meanings. For example, the expression *at the same time* can signal an adversative relationship or a sequential one, as in these examples:

| <i>Example</i> | <i>Meaning</i> | <i>Paraphrase</i> |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| We see several advantages to the proposed plan. | adversative | <i>on the other hand</i> |
| <i>At the same time</i>, there are some drawbacks. | | |
| Tonight my uncle will be on his way to Beijing. <i>At the same time</i>, my sister will be flying into Chicago from London. | sequential (simultaneous) | <i>meanwhile</i> |

In what follows, we will be concerned with still another type of challenge for ESL/EFL learners in using linking adverbs: namely, the need to identify correctly the kinds of logical relationships encoded in a text. In other words, speakers and writers must not only understand what a linking adverb means, but must also perceive how two stretches of discourse relate to each other in order to choose an appropriate connector to signal that relationship.⁸

When language users make errors in selecting an appropriate linking adverb to connect two parts of a text, does the problem arise from misunderstanding the adverb's meaning or from incorrectly identifying a logical relationship? This was the question that Goldman and Murray (1992) investigated in an experimental cloze test study in which undergraduate students, both native English speakers and ESL learners, were asked to select from a set of linking adverbs the one that expressed the logical relationship between two parts of a text. What they found was that learner errors in selecting connectors typically resulted not from a lack of knowledge regarding connector meanings, but from a "failure to infer the appropriate logical relation between ideas in a text" (p. 511). For example, both L1 and L2 users selected additive connectors in additive contexts, but they also erroneously selected causal or adversative connectors for texts requiring additive connectors. From the results of their study, Goldman and Murray concluded that language learners need to work on discourse-based understandings of the relationships between sentences in texts and that drilling on the meanings of connectors in isolated use is not helpful.

A framework for identifying the logical relationships between parts of text is offered by Williams (1996). The function of linking adverbs, as Williams explains, is to call attention to propositional frames that are encoded in a text, either explicitly or implicitly. If the frames (i.e., logical relationships) are only implicit, the listener or reader will have to reconstruct them from the meaning of the text. The following chart summarizes frames that Williams proposes to distinguish meanings of some of the most common connectors within the semantic group of adversatives, which are among the most difficult for many ESL/EFL learners to distinguish:

Meanings and Uses of Adversative Linking Adverbs

| <i>Linking Adverb</i> | <i>Meaning</i> | <i>Example</i> | <i>Use</i> |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| <i>nevertheless</i> | X implies Y. X is true, but Y is not true. One is led to expect one thing but finds something different to be true. | Sara has always been a top math student. <i>Nevertheless</i> , she failed calculus this quarter. | If someone is a good math student (X), we expect that person to be good at calculus (Y). For this reason, if (Y) is that <i>she failed history this quarter</i> , <i>nevertheless</i> would not be the appropriate connector. |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|
| <i>in contrast</i> | X (a) in contrast Y (b) Two different topics are different in at least one respect. | South Carolina is mild in the winter. <i>In contrast</i> , South Dakota is frigid. ⁹ | Here, the two “topics” are states, which differ in their winter climates, mild versus frigid. |
| <i>on the contrary</i> | Y denies proposition X | City living is supposed to be difficult. <i>On the contrary</i> , I really enjoy the convenience of living in a city. | <i>On the contrary</i> is often confused with <i>in contrast</i> . Notice, though, that <i>in contrast</i> is used to compare two things; <i>on the contrary</i> contradicts the first proposition. Compare: <i>I like skiing. In contrast, my partner likes ice skating. I like skiing. *On the contrary, my partner likes ice skating.</i> |
| <i>on the other hand</i> | X (a) on the other hand X (b) Only one topic is needed here; the contrast is made with respect to two contrasting qualities | Minnesota is one of our more scenic states. <i>On the other hand</i> , it is bitterly cold in the winter. | Often the qualities being contrasted are of the “good/bad” sort; one feature is positive, the other negative. Here, Minnesota is described as good in one way, bad in another. |
| <i>in any case</i> | X implies Y OR Not X implies Y Whether or not a condition holds, it implies the truth of the second proposition. | We can take this apartment, or we can take the other one. <i>In any case</i> , we have to take something soon! | <i>In any case</i> expresses succinctly the notion of <i>whether or not X occurs</i> . If we take this apartment (X), it is true that we must take something soon (Y). Or, if we do <i>not</i> take this apartment (not X), it is still true that we must take something soon (Y). |

Missing from this chart is the most frequent by far of the adversatives, *however*. This connector may be used almost generically whenever speaker/writers want to draw attention to a difference. For example, of 30 native-English speakers who provided acceptability judgments in Williams’s (1996) study, almost all considered *however* an acceptable replacement for *nevertheless*. The differences signaled by *however* are various, as summarized in the following chart:

Meanings Signaled by However

| Meaning | Example |
|------------------------------|---|
| Certainty versus uncertainty | We may go to Hawaii, or we may go to California. However, we have to find a way to escape the snow this winter. |
| Semantic opposition | Jill doesn't do well in school. However, her sister is a straight A student. |
| Topic change marker | I lost \$2,000 in Las Vegas last week. However, let's talk about something else. |

Turning now to two other categories of adverbs, additives and causals, we will consider how the meanings and uses of individual connectors in these categories differ.¹⁰

Meanings and Uses of Additive Linking Adverbs

While the additive meanings of linking adverbs are generally not as complex as some other semantic groups, they do pose challenges to ESL/EFL learners in using them for appropriate contexts. The following chart summarizes some of their differences:

| Linking Adverb | Meaning | Example | Use |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|
| <i>also</i> | Simple addition; often interchangeable with coordinating conjunction <i>and</i> | To get better organized, spend a little time reflecting on the day. <i>Also</i> , periodically clear your mind with a walk or some other activity. | In spoken and less formal written English, <i>also</i> often connects a piece of advice or other imperative with understood <i>you</i> subjects, especially when the connector begins a sentence. |
| <i>in addition</i> | Simple addition; often used to connect ideas that are describing situations or concepts rather than arguments | The Transportation Department reported today that 80 percent of all flights were on time this year. <i>In addition</i> , the rate of baggage being mishandled was the lowest during a five-year period. | Typically, the subjects of sentences joined by <i>in addition</i> are not identical. |
| <i>in addition to (+NP)</i> | Simple addition; in written texts, often used to connect longer spans of discourse | Calcium, found in dairy products, orange juice, and other foods, is needed for bone strength. <i>In addition to</i> good nutrition, weight-bearing exercise is important. | <i>In addition to</i> + a classifier NP (such as <i>nutrition</i>) can summarize and connect ideas in a paragraph or even larger text. <i>In addition</i> alone might not clearly signal what is being connected. |

| | | | |
|--------------------|--|---|--|
| <i>moreover</i> | Simple addition; often introduces a second point used to support a claim | Students applying to law schools need to know whether the schools have the resources to help them choose the right job. <i>Moreover</i> , prospective students need data about schools' career counseling services. | In this example, <i>moreover</i> connects two points in a news article concerned with obligations of law schools to be truthful about what they can offer students. |
| <i>furthermore</i> | Simple addition; typically introduces a third or fourth point to support an argument | We find that students who work part time performed better in the pre-test of managerial finance. We also find that student ownership of a checking account positively affected performance. <i>Furthermore</i> , we find that higher student participation improved student learning. | Here, <i>furthermore</i> connects the third of three research findings in a journal article. |
| <i>besides</i> | Emphatic; often used to introduce an additional reason or final argument in support of a point just made | Those items—a gun case and ammo pouch—were found in his home. But the defense said none of it was proof of murder. <i>And besides</i> , they had another suspect in mind. | This adverb is most commonly used in informal written or spoken English. In more formal English, it tends to connect a statement to a stretch of discourse longer than just the previous sentence. |
| <i>similarly</i> | Comparative; signals a semantic correspondence of ideas, such as similarity, in the ways things occur or operate | In the United States, there has long existed a sense of stewardship toward wild and domestic animals. The creation of national parks and wildlife refuges recognized the right to life of whole ecological communities. <i>Similarly</i> , until the mid-20th century, the small, diverse family farm was a place where animals were generally accorded love and dignity. | In written English, the clauses connected by <i>similarly</i> are often ideas supporting a generalization or claim as in this example, in which the claim is presented in the first sentence. |

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|---|---|
| <i>likewise</i> | Comparative; used much like <i>similarly</i> , though often in less formal contexts; often the subjects of clauses connected are the same or similar | The Fair Credit Billing Act limits credit card holders' liability. If the theft is reported before the card is used, the card holder isn't responsible for unauthorized transactions. <i>Likewise</i> , card holders aren't responsible for fraudulent purchases if only the card number is used. | In this example, note that both subjects refer to <i>credit card holders</i> . This contrasts with the example for <i>similarly</i> , in which the subjects of the two clauses are different. |
|-----------------|--|---|---|

Meanings and Uses of Causal Linking Adverbs

The connectors described as *causal* invite the listener/reader to assume a direct inferential relationship between propositions in two clauses:

| Linking Adverb | Meaning | Example | Use |
|------------------|---|--|---|
| <i>therefore</i> | Introduces results or conclusions that can be logically deduced or inferred from information to which it is linked | One pound of weight equals 3,500 calories stored in fat. <i>Therefore</i> , for Mr. X to shed 10 pounds, he must consume 35,000 calories less than he expends. | The information in the second sentence follows from the factual information given in the first one. The reader/listener could logically deduce what Mr. X must do to lose the specified weight. In less formal written and spoken English, <i>therefore</i> is often preceded by <i>and</i> . |
| <i>thus</i> | Used similarly to <i>therefore</i> to introduce a result that can be inferred from previous information. It may also introduce a conclusion from evidence | There is strong statistical evidence that drivers respond rather slowly to changes in fuel prices. <i>Thus</i> , the continued decrease in driving today reflects, in part, a delayed reaction to the earlier rise in the cost of oil. | In this example, a specific result (current reduction in driving) is inferred from the general claim expressed in the first sentence. |
| <i>hence</i> | Generally equivalent to <i>therefore</i> , introducing a deduction following reasons | This website photo tool is very easy to use. Also, it does not require registration. <i>Hence</i> , the perfect tool to share with your students! | <i>Hence</i> is most frequent in formal written English. In less formal English, such as this example, it is often followed by a phrase (such as an NP) representing a clause with an ellipted subject and verb (e.g., <i>it is</i> in this example). |

| | | | |
|---------------------|---|--|--|
| <i>consequently</i> | Signals a result consistent with information previously given: a true causal relationship rather than a deduction | Most of the paintings the artist sold in his lifetime were to friends, and he got no commissions. <i>Consequently</i> , he was poor. | In this example, the result (the artist's state of poverty) is believed to be caused by the circumstances previously stated. |
|---------------------|---|--|--|

DIFFERENCE ACROSS REGISTERS

Frequency Patterns

The summary charts we have presented in the previous sections have given some indication that certain linking adverbs are more commonly found in written English registers. Analyses of large corpora of spoken and written data have examined both the frequency patterns of linking adverb semantic categories, such as additives and adversatives, that occur across various registers and also the frequency of particular linking adverb words and expressions in these registers.

Of the four registers that Biber et al. (1999) examined—conversation, fiction, news and academic prose—conversation and academic prose had notably higher frequencies of linking adverbs than the other two. The individual expressions used in these two registers differed considerably, though. Of all linking adverbs identified, those we have called “causal connectors” occurred frequently in both conversation and academic prose. However, in conversation, occurrences of *so* accounted for the majority of the causal connectors, with *then* as the next most frequent, while in academic prose, there was more variety, including *therefore*, *thus*, and *as a result*. Adversative linking adverbs were the least common in the news register; as with the causal connectors, the frequency of lexical items in this category differed markedly in the conversation and academic prose registers. *Anyway* and *though* were by far the most frequent adversatives in conversation, whereas in academic prose, the most frequent was *however*. All in all, academic prose had the highest frequencies of linking adverbs per number of words, including higher proportions of what we have termed additive (e.g., *in addition*) and sequential (e.g., *first*, *in summary*) connectors. As Biber et al. summarize, this register requires its users to mark explicitly the connections between ideas, especially in presenting and developing arguments (p. 880). While in all registers, one-word linking adverbs were most frequent, Biber et al. also note that prepositional phrases (e.g., *as a result of*, *in addition to*) often serve as linking adverbs in academic prose (p. 884).

Liu's (2008) analysis of linking adverbs in the British National Corpus (BNC) supports the findings of Biber et al. (1999) that linking adverbs are most frequent in conversation and academic prose registers. Liu also found that a small set of lexical items (including *also*, *however*, *then*, and *so*) accounted for the majority of linking adverbs for some categories. One interesting finding in Liu's data is a much higher frequency of *meanwhile* in the news register than in other registers; there, it was used to narrate several events taking place at the same time. Another of Liu's findings that could be of interest to teachers of English as well as materials writers is that in comparison to conversational data, fictional dialogue tended to frequently use colloquial expressions such as *again* (additive meaning), *as a matter of fact*, and *by the way*.

A study by Peacock (2010) of 320 published research articles in eight disciplines (four science and four non-science) found that linking adverbs were very important as signaling and cohesive devices and more frequent than those in the general academic prose used

in the Biber et al. (1999) study. Peacock's analysis determined a frequency of over 12,000 linking adverbs per million words, much higher than Biber et al.'s frequency for academic prose in general, which was a little over 7,000. However, the frequencies within disciplines differed significantly, including much lower occurrences in two of the science categories.¹¹

While frequencies of linking adverbs across registers can help teachers identify which semantic categories and individual expressions may deserve focus, frequency alone should not determine what is covered. For example, we can assume that summary connectors would be much less frequent than some other types due to their discourse roles. Nevertheless, they serve an important function and deserve some attention in teaching contexts.

Position of Linking Adverbs in a Sentence

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings of recent corpus analyses is the difference between conversational English and written registers in the distribution of these connectors in positions other than sentence-initial. Biber et al. (1999) found that initial position was by far the most common for both conversation and academic prose. However, the final position was second most frequent in conversation and infrequent in academic writing, while the medial position was the second most common position in academic prose and rare in conversation (pp. 890–891).

When linking adverbs appear in medial position in academic prose, they are often found immediately after the subject as in this example:

Einstein, therefore, set to work to try to demolish the accepted version of quantum mechanics. (Biber et al., p. 891)

They can also occur frequently in other positions, such as after introductory prepositional phrases expressing a contrast, as in this example from COCA:

Tigers were once found in forests and other dense vegetation throughout Asia, from the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea to Siberia and Indonesia. In the past century, however, the number of wild tigers worldwide has plummeted from more than 100,000 to little more than 3,000. (Cheryl Dybas, Last of the Forest Guardians, *Natural History*, Feb. 2011, Vol. 119.4)

It should be noted that some linking adverbs, such as causal connectors *thus* and *therefore*, quite often follow the conjunction *and* as in this COCA example:

...the radius of the current observable universe is about 47 billion light-years, and thus it would be more than 90 billion light-years across. (Liz Kruesi, Ask Astro, *Astronomy*, January 2011, 39.1)

More research is needed to identify possible reasons why linking adverbs occur in the more marked medial position in written English. These reasons may be specific to particular semantic categories.

In accounting for the high frequency of final-position linking adverbs in conversation, Biber et al. (1999) note that this positioning is related to the lexical items that are the most frequent of linking adverbs in this register: *then*, *anyway*, and *though*. Some studies, however, suggest that these concessive markers may have functions other than signaling logical connections. For example, Barth-Weingarten and Couper-Kuhlen (2002) have observed that sentence-final *though* not only expresses concession by one speaker concerning what another speaker has just said, but may also serve as a discourse marker to signal a topic shift in the conversation.

ISSUES IN THE TEACHING OF LINKING ADVERBS TO ESL/EFL STUDENTS

As we have discussed, linking adverbs are frequently found in spoken English as well as written registers. However, most ESL/EFL instructional materials and studies have focused on their use in written English. Recent research has identified some of the most typical problems for learners in acquiring their use in academic or professional contexts. These problems can be broadly categorized as follows:

- Assigning incorrect meanings to specific linking adverbs
- Inappropriate register (levels of formality)
- Unclear reference
- Overuse

The next sections will discuss each of these problems and implications for teaching.

Problem: Incorrect Meanings

Studies of advanced English learners' use of linking adverbs in written English have identified specific linking adverbs that tend to be misused, presumably due to the misperception that expressions with similar functional labels as expressed by broad categories such as "additive" and "adversative" can be used to signal the same meanings. For example, Crewe (1990) notes the common mistake of Chinese L1 writers using the corrective adversative *on the contrary* instead of the appropriate *in contrast* or *on the other hand* to signal a contrastive meaning (p. 317). An example of this type of problem is the following:

Most primates, including humans, are active during the day. *On the contrary, some primate families, such as South American night monkeys, are solely nocturnal.

In the example above, the second sentence does not contradict the claim made in the first, so *on the contrary* is an inappropriate connector.

Other studies have attributed the misuse of linking adverbs to cross-linguistic influence. Field and Yip's (1992) comparative study of Cantonese and native English student writers found that the Chinese writers sometimes used the adversative *on the other hand* to add a point without a contrast. They suggest this may result from translation of a Chinese expression meaning "another side of aspect" used in an additive sense. A study by Granger and Tyson (1996) of essays written in English by advanced French writers also noted that some writers misused *on the contrary* for contrastive rather than corrective meaning when a phrase such as *on the other hand* should have been used. They also attributed writers' misuse of *in fact* and *indeed* to cross-linguistic influence. In French, these expressions are used as stylistic enhancers, whereas in English, readers expect them to introduce new information in relation to what was previously stated. The misuse of *besides* by German scholars writing abstracts in English is discussed by Ventola (1994), who attributes some of these problems to direct translation from German. In any event, Ventola points out that, in the misuses she observed, *besides* typically needs to be replaced by *in addition to* + a noun phrase to create a clear connection.

Not all misuse errors result from the two causes discussed above; i.e., from beliefs that all linking adverbs in the same broad semantic category are interchangeable or from L1 influence. A third type of problem, which we touched on earlier in our treatment of propositional frames, is the misinterpretation of the logical relationship holding between two connected stretches of discourse. ESL/EFL writing teachers may be familiar with one common manifestation of this problem: the use of *therefore* where a causal relationship between two parts of text does not exist. Milton and Tsang's (1993) study described how student writers used *therefore* to force a conclusion from inadequate evidence, a phenomenon that Chen (2006) also noticed in her study of papers written by MA TESOL students in Taiwan. Field and Yip (1992)

describe a similar problem with the connector *besides*, which they claim writers use to “weld together points which do not fit coherently” (p. 27). To address this issue of “cohesion without coherence,” Crewe (1990) recommends that instructors provide students with guidelines for questioning the relationships between sections of text and that they offer students one or more linking adverb choices based on responses to the questions. Of course, in cases where logical connections may not actually exist, student writers may need to restructure the parts of text being connected.

Problem: Inappropriate Register

Generally speaking, register-inappropriate use of linking adverbs can be of two types: (1) using informal connectors in formal registers, such as academic prose; and (2) the reverse—using connectors appropriate to formal registers in less formal contexts. Field and Yip (1992) found evidence of both types in their 1992 study of English essays written by native Cantonese speakers. On the one hand, some writers used connectors such as *anyway*, *actually*, and *besides* in ways that were more appropriate for conversational contexts. At the same time, the writers in their study sometimes used more formal connectors, such as additive adverbs *moreover* and *furthermore*, for essay topics that required a less formal register. This mix of registers resulted in an overall inconsistent style. Inappropriate informal connector usage was also identified in the academic papers that Chen (2006) examined, including the use of informal connectors *plus* and *what’s more*, as well as *actually*.

Problem: Unclear Reference

A final type of connector problem is that which results because a linking adverb alone is not sufficient to express clear reference to the ideas being connected. While this may happen in spoken English, it is generally not as noticeable since speakers can negotiate to clarify meaning. But in written English, a lack of clear connection to previous information can create reader comprehension problems. So, for example, instead of a linking adverb such as *in addition* used alone for creating a connection, a linking adverb prepositional phrase such as *in addition to*, followed by a noun phrase (e.g., *in addition to the problem of global warming*), can provide readers a better idea of the link to the new information. Granger and Tyson (1996), in discussing teaching implications of their findings of linking adverb misuse in English essays by French writers, stress that students need instruction in other forms of cohesion that will help them express logical relationships more clearly (p. 26). Similarly, Crewe (1990) proposes what he calls an *expansionist* approach in addressing the problems of connector misuse (and overuse, which we discuss next), giving examples of explicit causal markers such as *on account of this situation* and *because of these events* that could substitute for what he calls implicit causal markers like *therefore* and *thus* (pp. 322–323). Such use of noun reference with linking adverbs can help ESL/EFL students identify more specifically not only for readers but for themselves the ideas they are trying to link.

Overuse

A topic that often comes up in discussions on the teaching of linking adverbs to ESL/EFL students is the problem of their overuse. Anecdotally, teachers often complain that their students overuse connectors in academic writing tasks, especially essays. Thus, it becomes important not only to teach the meanings of these connectors, but when they should and should not be used. Many of the studies cited so far comparing the use of linking adverbs by ESL/EFL writers either with their use by native English-speaking peers or with frequencies in published writing have identified problems of overuse by ESL/

EFL writers.¹² But what does this really mean? If we consider the categories of problems described, the findings about “overuse” are often, though not always, also misuse in some sense. For example, the overuse of *but* and *and* as linking adverbs by Hong Kong student writers in a study by Bolton, Nelson, and Hung (2002) may reflect inappropriate use based on register. Both Bolton, Nelson, and Hung’s study and that done by Field and Yip (1992) found that adversative *on the other hand* and additive *besides* occurred only in the data by the Hong Kong writers; that is, they were not used at all by native English writers for similar text types. Again, at least some of these “overuses” may involve misuse, either meaning-based or, in the case of *besides*, inappropriate register. In keeping with this observation, Yueng (2009) also reports the overuse of *besides* by learners of English in Hong Kong, and she adds that the learners tend to use it to simply mean “in addition,” whereas in the COBUILD database, *besides* is more often used to reinforce an argument, giving it a sense of finality.

Additive linking adverbs in general have been noted as being overused by ESL/EFL writers in comparative studies, especially the connectors *furthermore* and *moreover*. As we discussed earlier, these additive adverbs have specialized uses in discourse and are not necessarily interchangeable with other additives such as *also* or *in addition*. So here, too, a type of misuse may overlap with overuse.

It should also be noted that some studies found that ESL/EFL writers underused certain categories of linking adverbs. For example, Chen (2006) found that the EFL graduate writers in her study significantly underused adversative adverbs, though they did tend to overuse additive and sequential connectors. Chen suggests that researchers and teachers go beyond the frequency patterns of overuse to examining what the causes may be of certain usage patterns among their students.

While most studies of linking adverb use by ESL/EFL students have involved written texts, Zareva (2011) has examined overuse of these connectors in the academic oral English presentations of university students from seven different L1 backgrounds. Comparing their presentations to those of native English speakers, she found that L2 presenters tended to overuse *so* as a result connector (in addition to its overuse as a filler). They also tended to overuse the sequential connector *first*, which Zareva noted was often not followed by another sequential connector, thus lessening its effectiveness as a discourse organizer.

In summary, current research on linking adverb usage by ESL/EFL students in classroom contexts suggests the following kinds of focus for teaching these structures:

- Distinguishing differences in meaning among connectors within the same category (e.g., additives, causals);
- Helping students to become aware of register differences in the use of linking adverbs (e.g., differences between *besides* and *in addition* or *but* and *however*);
- Identifying the logical relationships between parts of text being connected and checking whether connectors supplied signal these relationships;
- Giving students noticing and production practice in other forms of cohesion that can combine with linking adverbs, such as the use of pronouns;
- Considering specific lexical items that are often overused by ESL/EFL student writers and helping students understand the causes of such overuse;
- Discussing why overuse (in contrast to misuse) of linking adverbs in writing may hinder rather than facilitate reader comprehension.

Conclusion

During the decades after the publication of Halliday and Hasan's *Cohesion in English* in 1976, much attention was given in the fields of applied linguistics and composition to the need for connectors as a means of achieving cohesion in writing. Consequently, ESL/EFL composition textbooks began routinely to include a section on "transitional expressions," which typically offered lists of expressions under the semantic categories of addition, contrast, cause/effect, and so on. Students were encouraged to learn and use these expressions in their writing.

From our current perspective, this presentation of lists of connectors, especially the linking adverbs, has had some unfortunate results, which we have discussed in this chapter. One was the misunderstanding by ESL/EFL students that words and phrases under the same semantic category were interchangeable, resulting in misuse of connectors, both in terms of meaning and level of formality. In addition, some writing and grammar textbooks encouraged overuse of connectors by asking students to use connectors multiple times in short texts; this practice produced stilted prose in which the connectors failed to serve their functions of making prose more understandable to readers. In addition to the problems created by textbooks and other materials, the difficulty of having few large corpora made it almost impossible to determine patterns of usage among speakers and writers, both native and nonnative speakers of English.

Recent work in corpus linguistics and other linguistic areas has provided a great deal of information for ESL/EFL teachers and materials developers on how connectors are used within and across different registers. Corpus-based studies on ESL/EFL students' writing and academic speaking have identified some of the more specific areas for teaching focus. With this information, and undoubtedly more to come, teachers can offer ESL/EFL students instruction and practice of logical connectors that targets particular challenges with the forms, meanings, and uses of these important structures.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** Students need to be aware of the different patterns of connected clauses. A teacher might construct pairs or sets of sentences that have connectors that are semantically or functionally similar in order to illustrate the syntactic differences (and resulting differences in punctuation):

They couldn't play ball because the dog ate the ball.

The dog ate the ball. As a result, they couldn't play ball.

They tried to catch the train, but they woke up too late.

They tried to catch the train. But they woke up too late.

Although they tried to catch the train, they were too late.

They tried to catch the train. However, they were too late.

The train had gone, so they left the station.

The train had gone. Consequently, they left the station.

If teachers, in modeling the sentence sequences, accentuate the relevant intonation heavily each time, it may create a classroom atmosphere that makes such repetitive

exercises not only bearable, but amusing. Teachers may ask individual students to repeat a sentence-pair and then ask the other students whether they “heard” a comma, period (full stop), or no punctuation at all. In this way, the relation between intonation and punctuation may be highlighted. At the same time, teachers should remind students that some of these connectors are seldom used in speaking. The point of this activity is to “hear” the punctuation.

2. **Meaning.** Give students a scrambled paragraph. Some of the sentences should contain logical connectors. Ask the students to unscramble the sentences and reconstruct the paragraph.
3. **Form/Meaning.** Some functional relationships, such as reason-result, are especially common in academic writing. Students in advanced composition classes need to learn and practice different ways in which these relationships can be expressed. For example, the following sentences express reasons for high levels of pollution in Los Angeles using various connector types:

Because/Since air inversion occurs in the Los Angeles Basin, pollution is high.

Pollution is high in the Los Angeles Basin because of / due to / on account of / as a result of air inversion.

Air inversion occurs in the Los Angeles Basin. As a result, pollution is high.

Pollution is high in the Los Angeles Basin due to the fact that there is air inversion.

Pollution is high in the Los Angeles Basin. The reason is that there is air inversion.

The existence of air inversion causes pollution to be high in the Los Angeles Basin.

Air inversion exists in the Los Angeles Basin. Consequently, pollution is high.

Students might be given pairs of grammatically unconnected sentences and asked to paraphrase each pair in three ways that show the cause-effect relationship. Then, they can be asked to incorporate these ways into their own writing on a topic that naturally involves a cause-effect relationship (for example, “What are the effects of extensive online reading on people’s reading habits?” or “What will happen when global warming increases?”).

4. **Form.** Studies have indicated that ESL/EFL learners tend to place the majority of linking adverbs sentence-initially, which can increase the reader’s impression that they are overusing these connectors. As a noticing exercise, students could be given examples of sentences with sentence-medial connectors.

For each, teachers could ask students to do the following:

- Circle the connectors.
- Note what kinds of punctuation, if any, are used before and after the connector.
- Discuss what sentence parts the connectors follow (e.g. noun phrases, verbs or verb phrases). This step would be most appropriate with older, advanced students who know grammar terminology.

An authentic text could be used for this activity. Online concordancers such as the Corpus of Contemporary English (COCA) or the Compleat Lexical Tutor can also provide examples to be adapted as needed (deleting words, rephrasing or providing more context). In either case, authentic examples will show where the connectors are placed in relation to other constituents. Here is an adapted example from COCA, discussing the fairy tale “Cinderella”:

Cinderella’s stepsisters had noble blood. Cinderella, born of a peasant father and mother, had none. It was no accident, therefore, that she was not invited to the ball. (Steven Popkes, *The Secret Lives of Fairy Tales*, 2010, Vol. 118.1/2, p. 167)

If a class meets in a computer lab, students can be shown how to research the positions of connectors on their own. This can help students become aware of which linking adverbs tend to appear most often in positions other than sentence-initial since not all linking adverbs can or tend to be used this way. As a follow-up, in a writing class, students can examine their drafts to see if any sentence-initial connectors might be more effectively placed sentence-medially.

5. **Meaning.** Teachers can highlight the meaning differences among the connectors by creating single sentences and then asking students to add one sentence using different logical connectors. Students could work in pairs, with each pair given a different connector to use in the second sentence. They could then share the results and discuss differences. For example,

When I got up this morning, I discovered my bicycle was missing.

Therefore, ...

In addition, ...

Moreover, ...

Nevertheless, ...

While this activity can serve to review a variety of logical connector meanings, the teacher may want to remind students that in written assignments, they should avoid overuse of connectors.

6. **Use.** Often clear connections between sentences in academic writing require more than one kind of cohesive device. To give advanced students practice in creating clear links between parts of a text, give them short paragraphs in which they need to complete the last sentence by providing (1) a prepositional logical connector followed by (2) a noun phrase that links to preceding text (e.g., *in addition to these reasons, as a result of this mistake, because of these problems*). The paragraph could be based on information taken from sources such as Wikipedia and adapted. Here is an example:

Many people today live a more sedentary lifestyle than in the past. Their work outside the home is not physically demanding, and they use labor-saving devices at home. Their recreational pursuits, such as television watching, are also less active. _____, people worldwide increasingly rely on automobiles and other motorized vehicles for transportation. (Information source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obesity>)

7. **Meaning.** As this chapter has discussed, students often know the meanings of linking adverbs but need practice in identifying logical relationships between sentences or longer spans of text in order to use ones that are appropriate. To provide such practice, the teacher could give students groups of three sentences, with the first sentence introducing a topic and the second and third logically related. Students can first identify what the relationship is, and then choose a linking adverb to add to the last sentence. Here are several examples:

1. Roses have been a favorite flower for centuries. They are known for their wonderful fragrances. They have come to symbolize personal feelings such as love or friendship. (Addition)
2. Red roses are associated with love and faithfulness. White roses may symbolize purity or innocence. (Contrast)
3. Roses do not like hot temperatures. In hot climates, they need to be protected from late afternoon sun. (Result)

8. **Use.** A way to make students sensitive to register differences might be to have them substitute a logical connector of one register with one from another—for instance, to have them change each of the following example sequences with informal or universally acceptable connectors to ones with formal connectors:

Possums have sharp claws and teeth. Also, they are not easily trained.

So they do not make good pets.

(Also → Moreover; So → Therefore, Consequently, Thus)

The team was losing the game badly. But they decided to continue to play their hardest.

(But → Nevertheless, However)

They wanted a Rolls-Royce. I mean, they wanted the best car they could possibly find.

(I mean → That is)

9. **Use.** To practice putting clauses in an order that will promote cohesion within a text, give students a passage in which certain sentences in the passage are presented in two forms: a. Subordinate clause + main clause; and b. Main clause + subordinate clause. When they come to such a choice, students should choose order (a) or (b) and explain why they chose as they did.
10. **Meaning.** Research on connectors has identified adversative linking adverbs as one of the most difficult semantic categories for ESL/EFL learners; in particular, they have trouble distinguishing connectors such as *on/to the contrary*, *in fact*, and *in reality*, which signal contrastive and corrective information in relation to a previous statement, from simple contrast connectors. To give students practice using these connectors, the instructor could ask them to research commonly held beliefs that aren't true about people, places, or things. Students would then write the false belief or assumption followed by a sentence with a linking adverb and a factual statement. The following sentences regarding beliefs about animals are examples:

Bats are often said to be blind. In fact, while some bats have poor vision, other bats, known as megabats, have excellent eyesight.

Many people believe that bulls will attack anything colored red, based on the fact these animals charge waving red capes in bullfights. *In reality*, bulls do not attack because of the color, but rather because of the waving of the cape. (Information source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_stereotypes)

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide an original sentence illustrating each of the following terms. Underline the pertinent words in your example.
- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. adverb subordinator | e. purpose connector |
| b. linking adverb | f. causal connector |
| c. concessive connector | g. inferential connector |
| d. time connector | |

2. Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences:
 - a. The business did not have enough employees; therefore, they hired more.
 - b. You can try that route to San Francisco; you will never get there, however.
 - c. Mary is always punctual. Her sister, in contrast, never arrives on time.
 - d. They bought the blue car even though they preferred the red one.
3. Account for the unacceptability of the following sentences:
 - a. *You see lots of trees in Oregon; on the contrary, there are few in Arizona.
 - b. *We took the extra class, as a result, we understood the material completely.
 - c. *I liked some parts of the movie, although, I wouldn't recommend it to most people.
 - d. *Crystal glasses are very fragile; nevertheless, plastic glasses are stronger.
 - e. David was working hard in the garden. *While George was napping in the hammock.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

4. *There is increasing use of the word plus in everyday American speech in ways like those below:*

They had to drive five miles out of the way. Plus, they had to drive through mud.

There are three midterms in the class. Plus, you have to write a 10-page paper.

This word is normally not found in lists of conjunctions or logical connectors. How would you characterize this word—as a coordinating conjunction, an adverb subordinator, a linking adverb, or none of these? Make your case by constructing relevant acceptable and unacceptable examples and providing syntactic arguments.
5. *Suppose that you are faced with the following sentences in student compositions. Assuming that you want to offer some rationale for correction, how would you explain the problems below?*
 - a. *Although I wanted to attend that college, but it was too far away from home.
 - b. *The rain came down in torrents, as a result, we had to cancel the picnic.
 - c. *My sister loves to go to movies in the afternoon; on the contrary, I hate that.
 - d. *If he tells me how to get there, so I will follow his directions.
 - e. *Even you gave me the money, I wouldn't go to see that movie.
6. *Suppose that you have said in a writing class that subordinate clauses cannot stand alone but need a main clause attached in order to create a properly formed sentence. A student approaches you with the following advertisements and asks for an explanation:*

Caffall, the caffeine tablet. When you can't get that morning cup of coffee.

Use Stayfresh deodorant. Because you can't afford to worry about body odor.

Such fragments are quite common in the media, especially in advertising. How would you respond to such questions?

7. The following is adapted from a student essay:

My family decided to take our usual family vacation at my grandparents' home in the northern part of the island. At that time, my family consisted of me, my mother, my father, and my brother and sister. Also, one of my cousins was going on the trip. So we packed up our car with food; in addition, we took camping supplies. Moreover, we also brought scuba-diving equipment; however, only my brother and I were really interested in that. Therefore, we had a car which was full of equipment, and in addition to that, we did not have enough room for all of us. Consequently, we had to decide what we should do . . .

In what ways might you respond to the student's use of connectors given the discussion of connector problems in this chapter?

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For an extensive discussion of interclausal coherence, see:

Givón, T. (1990). *Syntax: A functional-typological introduction* (Vol. 2). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

For a reference that inventories adverb subordinators in 50 European languages, see:

Kortmann, B. (1996). *Adverbial subordination: A typology and history of adverbial subordinators based on European languages*. Berlin, Germany/New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter.

For an alternative view of connectors that is grounded in cognitive psychology and the theory of relevance, see:

Blakemore, D. (1992). *Understanding utterances*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.

For an extended treatment of clause combining that is accessible to intermediate to advanced ESL/EFL students, consult:

Sinclair, J., & Fox, G. (1990). *Collins COBUILD English grammar*. London, England: Collins.

For a discussion of the misuse and overuse of connectors, see:

Crewe, W. J. (1990). The illogic of logical connectives. *ELT Journal*, 44(4), 316–325.

For ESL/EFL textbooks that devote substantial attention to logical connectors, consult:

Cake, C. D. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 5*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Frodesen, J., & Eyring, J. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 4* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Endnotes

1. There is no reason why the conjunctions treated in Chapter 24 could not also be considered *logical connectors*, especially when considered at the clause-connecting level.
2. Data like these led Emonds (1972) to the conclusion that many if not all of these subordinators are, in fact, better seen as prepositions that take clausal objects. One reason supporting his claim was that just as some verbs take phrasal, clausal, or either phrasal or clausal objects, so may prepositions take different object types; the lexical overlap in the common words in the above pairs of sentences may be no accident. While Emonds's arguments are quite convincing, we continue to use the traditional term *adverb subordinator*.
3. We do not draw a line connecting the two independent clauses as we did for clauses conjoined by coordinating conjunctions in Chapter 24. The reason is that while there is a meaning relationship between the clauses, there is no special syntactic relationship.
4. Perhaps this clause length principle explains in part the prescriptive rule of no comma; the subordinate clauses in the made-up examples used for illustration in student textbooks tend to be rather short (and conceptually simple); e.g., *Jack failed the math test although he had studied very hard*. However, even in COCA, many sentence-final subordinate clauses separated from the main clause by a comma are not especially long.
5. In spoken English, this type of construction could occur with a pause after the first clause and falling intonation in the second clause as a kind of "afterthought clause," where a speaker appends the subordinate clause as if suddenly realizing that the thought that has just been expressed is incomplete.
6. A semicolon and a period are associated with the same end-of-sentence falling intonation. The chief difference between the two types of punctuation is often said to be that when one uses a semicolon, one is attempting to show that the two sentences are more strongly integrated in some way. There is, in fact, a strong correlation between the use of semicolons and the use of linking adverbs.
7. More specifically, the framework here has been revised and expanded somewhat from Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) to include several subcategories from Liu's (2008) analysis of linking adverbs in four written registers and spoken English. The examples include additional linking adverbs identified in Liu (2008) and Chen (2006) as frequently occurring, at least in some registers, in their corpora.
8. It should be noted that not only ESL/EFL learners, but native speakers of English, especially younger learners, may also fail to correctly identify logical relationships between propositions and may use inappropriate connectors.
9. This frame distinguishes *whereas* as well:
Chicago is a fun place, whereas Centerville is dead.
***Chicago is a fun place, whereas it is an expensive place.**
10. All chart examples are adapted from spoken and written data in COCA.
11. It should be noted, however, that exact comparisons of frequencies between studies cannot be made because the connector categories and lexical items included are not identical in these studies.
12. Some studies, such as Bolton, Nelson, and Hung (2002), have found that native English-speaking student writers also overuse some linking adverbs in comparison with published writing though the lexical items overused may differ between the two.

Introduction

In a survey of the most serious teaching problems in English grammar encountered by ESL teachers in the Los Angeles area, Covitt (1976) found that conditionals ranked fifth.¹ This is not difficult to understand. Conditional sentences consist of two clauses, a subordinate clause and a main clause, and therefore are more complex syntactically than many other structures. Furthermore, the semantics of all the various types of conditionals are subtle and hard to understand—sometimes even for proficient English speakers. Good comprehensive descriptions are not readily available. Moreover, ESL/EFL students need a good grasp of the English tense-aspect system, as well as the modal auxiliaries and negation, before they can cope with the full range of conditional sentences in English.

In addition to the general problems noted previously, we must point out that ESL/EFL textbooks and reference grammars typically provide oversimplified information. For example, some texts introduce and practice only three types of conditional sentences (the labels used to describe these structures vary):

Type 1. Future conditional: **If I have the money, I will take a vacation.**

Type 2. Present conditional: **If I had the money, I would take a vacation.**

Type 3. Past conditional: **If I had had the money, I would have taken a vacation.**

Several reference grammars refer to the first sentence as a “real” or “possible” conditional, as opposed to the second and third sentences, which refer to the “unreal/hypothetical” present and past, respectively.

Another problem is that ESL/EFL students, who have learned to associate past tense with past time, often find it hard to believe that sentences like the second one here refer to present and not past time. In addition, they become confused because they hear and read many types of conditional sentences that are not included in the three types cited. In fact, a significant problem with this traditional three-type description is that it does not treat the most frequent (and also the simplest) conditional sentence type in English:²

If you boil water, it vaporizes.

If Mark goes swimming, he catches a cold.

In this chapter, we provide a more comprehensive description of conditionals that should help ESL/EFL teachers better understand this topic and thus prepare you to teach conditionals more effectively.

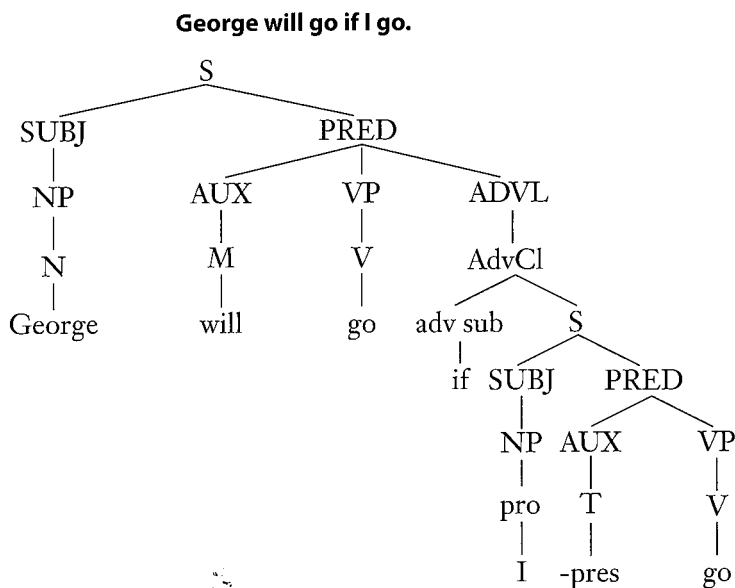
The Form of Conditionals

A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

A *conditional sentence* is a complex sentence that consists of a main clause and a subordinate clause; the latter prototypically begins with the adverb subordinator *if*. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) state that conditional sentences express the dependence of one set of circumstances (i.e., the result clause) on another (i.e., the *if* clause); furthermore, in most cases, two clause orderings are possible (p. 323):

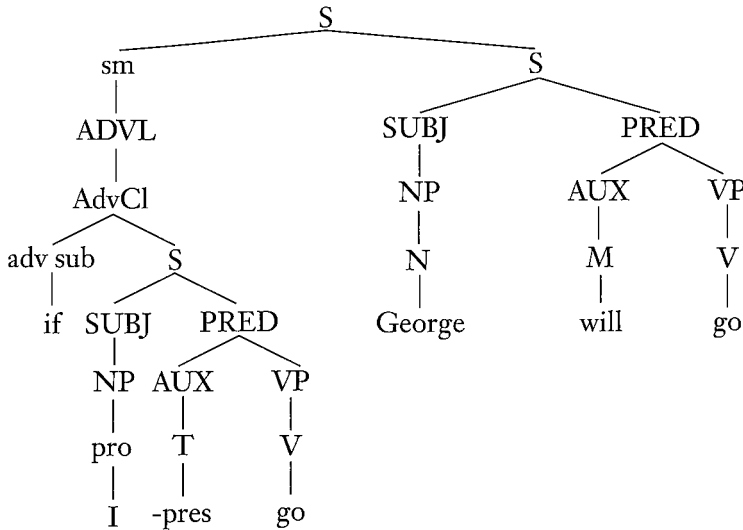
If I go, George will go. If Dracula returns, I will faint.
George will go if I go. I will faint if Dracula returns.

In either order, the *if* clause expresses the condition, and the main clause gives the result or outcome. We will treat the *if* clause as an adverb clause of condition. By so doing, conditional clauses are placed in final position using the system of phrase structure rules presented in Chapter 6.



In order to account for the *if* clause in initial position, we place the adverb clause under the sentence modifier (sm), as was discussed in Chapter 25:

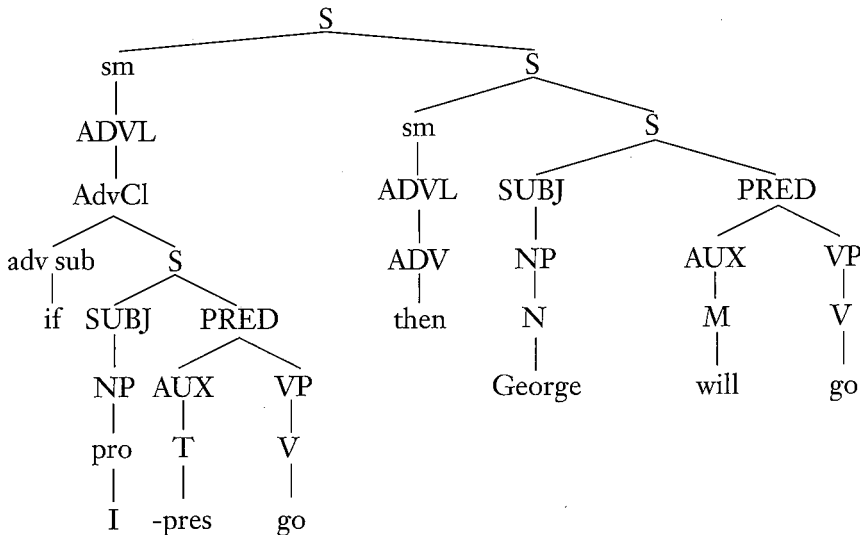
If I go, George will go.



There is one other possibility. When the *if* clause occurs in initial position, there is the option to have *then* occur before the main clause in certain cases to be discussed later. Let us assume that we wanted to account for:

If I go, then George will go.

We would start with the same phrase structure rules used previously for the second tree diagram and optionally include *then* as a sentence modifier (sm) of the rightmost S:



Note that the inclusion of *then* is optional, and it occurs only if the conditional clause is in initial position; that is, *then* is unlikely to occur when the *if* clause follows the main clause:

***Then George will go if I go.**

If such a sentence were to occur in a conversation, it can be argued that such an instance of *then* is not part of the conditional proposition proper. Rather, it is a discourse marker in the sense of Schiffrin (1987) that, similar to *so*, occurs in conversations independent of conditional clauses:

Then/So we can expect to see you at noon tomorrow?

Whenever the team loses, they are miserable for days.

(If the team loses, they are miserable for days.)

- imperative + *or/otherwise*

Finish your meal, or/otherwise there's no dessert for you.

(If you don't finish your meal, there's no dessert for you.)

- imperative + *and*

Do that again, and I'll get very angry.

(If you do that again, I'll get very angry.)

- inclusive imperative with no conjunction, just juxtaposition

Let's not be late. They'll leave without us.

(If we're late, they'll leave without us.)

To this list, we should add another construction cited by Frazier (2003):

- generic relative clauses

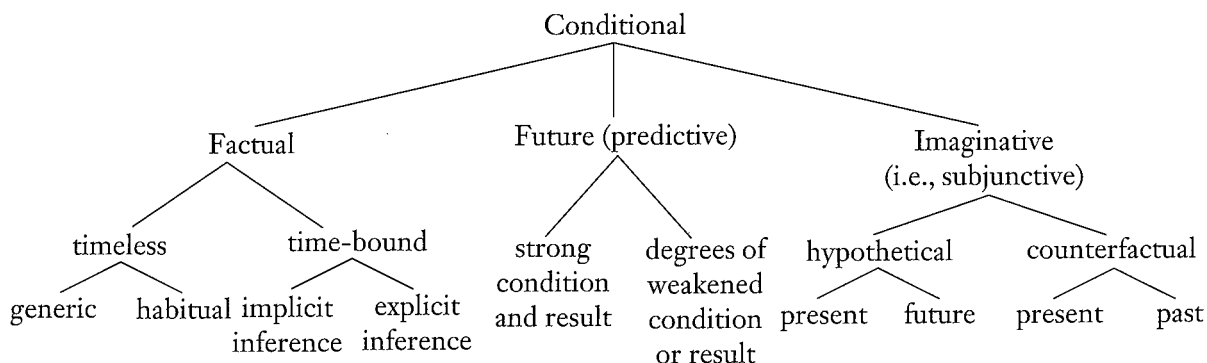
A car that gives good mileage saves the driver a lot of money.

(If a car gives good mileage, it saves the driver a lot of money.)

The Meaning of Conditionals: A Semantic Overview

Dancygier and Sweetser (2000) adopt a cognitive linguistics approach to explain the core meaning of conditionals. They posit that conditionals normally precede the main clause because they provide a conceptual framework or mental space for the interpretation of subsequent clauses. In what follows, we will distinguish within this general framework, more specific meanings. English conditional sentences express three different kinds of semantic relationships: factual conditional relationships, future (or predictive) conditional relationships, and imaginative conditional relationships. We will discuss each of these types with its subtypes in turn.

A Semantic Taxonomy of Conditional Sentence Types



FACTUAL CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

Factual conditional sentences occur with great frequency in everyday English, and yet they are overlooked altogether in many ESL/EFL textbooks. Factual conditionals consist of four

types: generic and habitual, which are timeless; and implicit inference and explicit inference, which are time-bound.

Generic Factual Conditionals

Generic factual conditionals express relationships that are true and unchanging; for example:

If oil is mixed with water, it floats. If you boil water, it vaporizes.

Because of their unchanging truth value, these conditionals normally take a simple present tense in both clauses. However, one also encounters generic factual conditionals that refer to past states of affairs and take past-tense verb forms:

If prehistoric animals came too close to the La Brea tar pits, they got stuck in the tar and died.

Generic factual conditionals are especially frequent in scientific writing, since the sciences are typically concerned with such absolute relationships.

Habitual Factual Conditionals

Habitual factual conditionals resemble generic factuals in that they also express a relationship that is not bounded in time; however, the relationship is based on habit instead of physical laws. Habitual factuals express either past or present relationships that are typically or habitually true; for example:

Present: **If I wash the dishes, Sally dries them.**

Past: **{ If Nancy said, "Jump!" Bob jumped.
If Nancy said, "Jump!" Bob would jump. }**

This type of conditional sentence is frequent in conversation. Both clauses usually have the same tense: simple present in both clauses if the habitual relationship refers to extended present time; simple past in both clauses or *would* + verb in the result clause if the sentence refers to a past habit.

Note that for both generic and habitual conditionals, it is possible to substitute *when* or *whenever* for *if* and still express more or less the same idea:

When(ever) you boil water, it vaporizes.

When(ever) I wash the dishes, Sally dries them.

Implicit Inference Conditionals

Factual conditionals that express an implicit inference are different from generic or habitual factuals in that they express inferences about specific time-bound relationships. As such, they use a much wider range of tense and aspect markers, and they also tend to occur with certain modal auxiliaries. Schachter (1971) provides some examples of what we refer to as *implicit inference conditionals* (p. 70):

If smog can be licked in L.A., it can be licked anywhere.

If the radicals haven't made the government more responsive, they have wasted their time.

If there was a happy man in the world that night, it was John Tunney.

To these, we add a few more examples of our own:

If Jane is the first vice president of the club, Don is the second vice president.

If it's Tuesday, it's Sam's birthday.

Implicit inference conditionals, like their habitual counterparts, are conversational in flavor, and like generic and habitual factuals, implicit inference factuals tend to maintain the same tense and aspect or the same modal in both clauses—even though they use a much wider range of tenses and auxiliary verbs. However, implicit inference factuals differ from generic

and habitual factials in that *when* or *whenever* cannot substitute for *if* without changing the meaning and often making the sentence nonsensical:

?When(ever) it's Tuesday, it's Sam's birthday.

The lack of semantic congruity here is due to the fact that this type of conditional is expressing a more specific time-bound or location-bound inference, rather than a generic or habitual relationship.

Explicit Inference Factual Conditionals

The final type of factual conditional, the explicit inference conditional, is the only case where we do not find the usual parallelism of tense, aspect, or modal in both clauses. This is because the conditional (i.e., the *if* clause) is used as the basis for making an explicit inference; the result clause thus contains an inferential modal—typically *must* or *should*:

If someone's at the door, it must be Peter.

If anyone has the answer, it should be Rod.

Explicit inferential factials are similar to implicit inference factials in that both refer to more specific time-bound events or states in the *if* clause. Also, both involve making inferences; however, only the explicit inference factual conditional overtly marks the inferential process with a modal. Explicit inference conditionals, however, are more limited in range, since they cannot occur with the same variety of tense and modal combinations that implicit inferences do. Like implicit inference conditionals, explicit inference conditionals can refer to past as well as present time. (Recall Chapter 8, where we learned that past inference with *must* or *should* is expressed by adding *have ...-en* after the modal.)

Past implicit inference: **If he was there, he saw the accident.**

Past explicit inference: **If he was there, he must have seen the accident.**

Explicit inference conditionals appear to be one of the environments where *then* can occur before the result clause (more on this later):

If he was there, then he must have seen the accident.

FUTURE (OR PREDICTIVE) CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

Strong Condition and Result

Many other authors have discussed “future conditionals.” For example:

If it rains, I'll stay home.

Such sentences express future plans or contingencies. The normal pattern for this type of conditional is simple present tense in the *if* clause and some explicit indication of future time (e.g., *will* or *be going to*) in the result clause:

If you finish your vegetables, I'm going to (gonna) buy you an ice cream cone.

If Steve goes to class, he will get us the answers to the quiz.

Degrees of Weakened Condition or Result

The examples above reflect the only type of future conditional that most ESL/EFL texts mention. However, sometimes the future outcome expressed in the result clause is not sufficiently certain to warrant the use of *will* or *be going to*, in which case a weaker modal of prediction such as *may*, *might*, or *should* is used:

If you finish your vegetables, I may buy you an ice cream cone.

If Steve goes to class, he should get us the answers to the quiz.

Thus, the prediction scale that we outlined for modals in Chapter 8 also applies to the result clauses of future conditional sentences:

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>will, be going to</i> = | certain (strong result) |
| <i>should</i> = | probable |
| <i>may</i> = | possible (stronger than <i>might</i> or <i>could</i>) |
| <i>might/could</i> = | possible (weaker than <i>may</i>) |

(i.e., a progressively weakened prediction about the result from *will* to *might*)

There is also a way to weaken the condition expressed in the *if* clause of a future conditional sentence by using the modal *should* or the verb *happen*—or both of them together:

| | | | |
|-------|---|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| If it | } | should | } rain, I'll stay home. |
| | | happens to | |
| | | should happen to | |

Therefore, we feel that it is an incomplete treatment of future conditionals to present only one form to students (e.g., *If it rains, I'll stay home*)—especially if the students are at an intermediate or advanced level in their study of English; such students will be encountering “weakened” versions of this construction in both spoken and written English.

IMAGINATIVE CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

The imaginative conditional sentences are the most problematic of the three main types in our description.³ There are two subtypes of imaginative conditionals—hypotheticals and counterfactuals.

Hypothetical Conditionals

Hypothetical conditionals express what the speaker perceives to be unrealized or unlikely, yet theoretically possible events or states, in the *if* clause:

If Joe had the time, he would go to Mexico. (present time hypothetical)

The *if* clause is not strongly negated here. There is always an outside chance that Joe has (or will have) the time. In hypothetical conditionals, the negative quality of the *if* clause can be weakened such that the possibility of the result occurring becomes perceptibly weaker:

| | | | |
|--------|---|-------------------------|---|
| If Joe | } | should | } have the time, he would go to Mexico. ⁴ |
| | | happened to | |
| | | should happen to | |

Hypothetical conditionals can refer to the future as well as the present (they are open to change in the present or future). Depending on the strength of the speaker's belief, different modals can be used in the main clause:

Present: **If Joe had the time now, he would/could/might go to Mexico.**

Future: **If Joe were to have the time next year, he would/could/might go to Mexico.**

Counterfactual Conditionals

Counterfactual conditionals, on the other hand, express impossible events or states with the *if* clause:

If my grandfather were alive today, he would experience a very different world.
(present time counterfactual; my grandfather died in 1978)

The *if* clause is strongly negated (i.e., my grandfather is not alive today, nor will he be alive in the future).

Weakening is odd in a counterfactual conditional since the *if* clause is strongly negated and the condition remains impossible:

?If my grandfather $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{should} \\ \text{should happen to} \end{array} \right\}$ be alive today, he would experience a very different world.

Counterfactual conditionals refer to impossibilities with reference to the present or the past, but not the future [we don't know what (im)possibilities the future holds]:⁵

Present: **If workers had the proper training, unemployment would be much lower than it is.**

Past: **If workers had had the proper training, there wouldn't have been such a bad accident.**

Tenses in Imaginative Conditionals

One problem with imaginative conditionals arises with the tenses used. The past tense in the conditional clause refers to the present time, and the past perfect tense refers to past time. Furthermore, we have a vestige of the Old English subjunctive mood⁶ to refer to the present in the use of *were* with singular first and third person subjects where *was* is the expected form:⁷

If my grandfather were here now, he would be angry.

If I were the president, I would make some changes.

And, the subjunctive form of the phrasal modal *be to* is used for the hypothetical future:

If I were to run for president, it would surprise everyone.

Even rarer in current English than the use of *were* to express the subjunctive mood in imaginative conditionals is the occasional use (now slightly archaic) of subjunctive *be* in present conditionals; for example:

If it be inappropriate to have said this, I humbly apologize.

Sometimes the difference between using a future conditional and a hypothetical conditional is a matter of speaker choice or stance:

Future: **If it rains, I will stay home.**

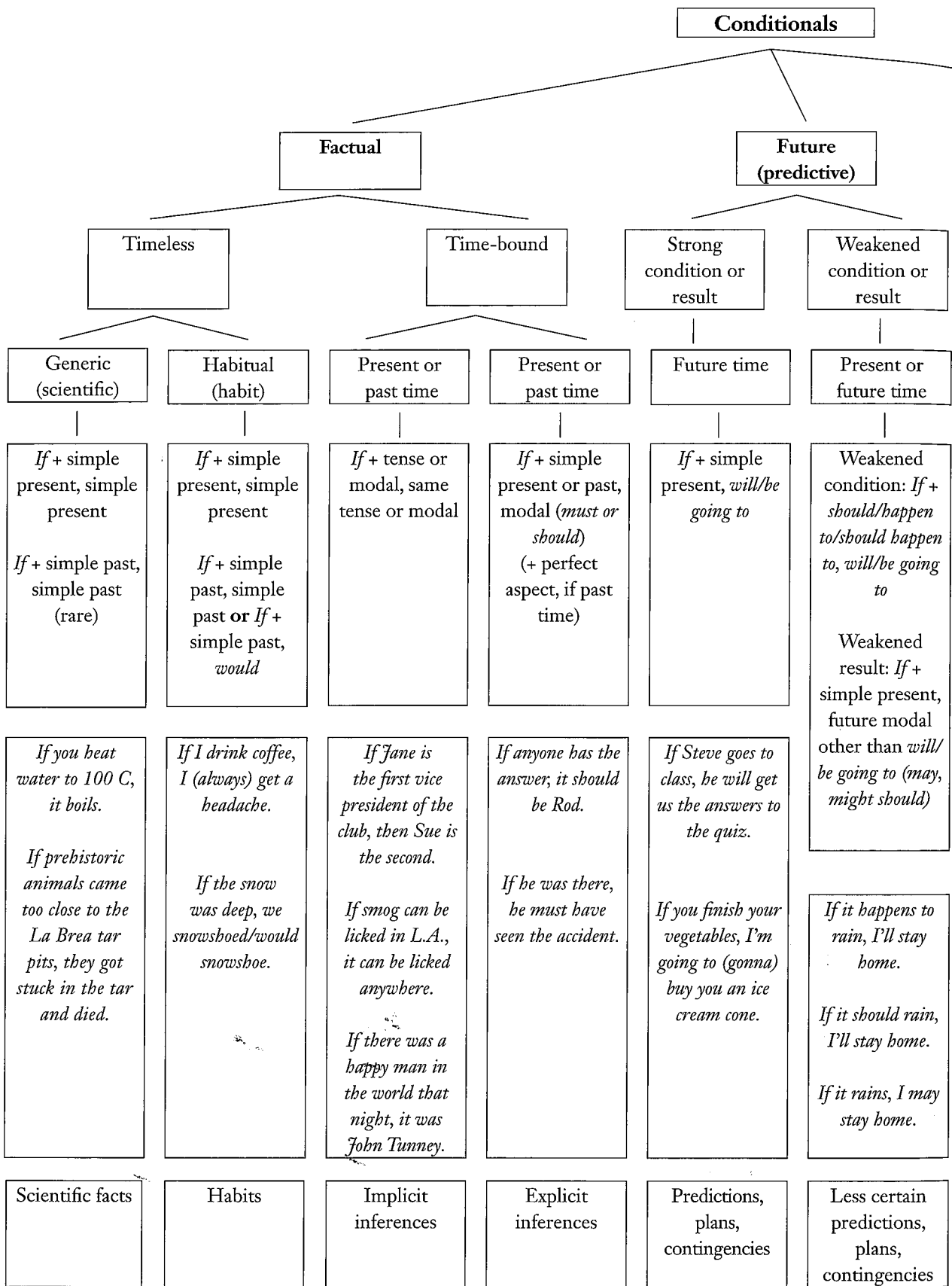
Hypothetical: **If it $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{were to} \\ \text{should} \end{array} \right\}$ rain, I would stay home.**

If it rained, I would stay home.

The choice reflects the degree of confidence in the speaker's mind concerning the fulfillment of the condition: the future conditional—if not weakened, as discussed previously—expresses a greater degree of confidence that the condition is a real possibility than does the hypothetical conditional.

A SEMANTIC TAXONOMY OF CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

We realize that the abovementioned semantic taxonomy of conditional sentences, while more comprehensive than most other descriptions available, still does not account for every possible conditional sentence in English. However, we believe that it provides a sufficiently rich set of distinctions to present to intermediate and advanced ESL/EFL students, since the most frequently occurring types have been included. Our semantic categories and their forms are summarized in this figure, inspired by a request from Julia Miller:



Imaginative

Hypothetical
(unlikely but possible)

Counterfactual
(impossible)

Present or
future time

Present time

Past time

*If + simple past,
would/could/
might
or if + were to,
would/could/
might*

*If + simple
past, would or
if + present
subjunctive,
would*

*If + past
perfect, would
+ perfect aspect*

*If Joe had the
time, he would
go to Mexico.*

*If Joe were to
have the time
next year, he
might go to
Mexico.*

Weakened:
*If Joe should
have/happened
to have/should
happen to have
the time, he
could go to
Mexico.*

Unrealized or
unlikely yet
theoretically
possible event

*If workers had
the proper
training,
unemployment
would be much
lower than it is.*

*If my
grandfather were
alive today, he
would be 100
years old.*

... but he isn't.

*If my
grandfather had
still been alive in
2006, he would
have been 100
years old.*

... but he
wasn't.

SOME OTHER MEANING DISTINCTIONS: CONDITIONAL AND RELATED CONNECTORS

Only If. Compare the following sentences:

I will stay home if it rains.

I will stay home only if it rains.⁸

In these sentences, *only if* marks a condition that is exclusive; that is, no other condition will bring about the stated result. *If*, on the other hand, expresses a weaker or more neutral or open condition, in that it does not exclude the possibility that other conditions might also bring about the same result. Thus we have the following semantic relationships expressed by conditional adverb subordinators in English:

open (unmarked) conditions: **if**

exclusive (marked) conditions: **only if** (sometimes: *if and only if*)

Unless versus If...Not. Most reference grammars and ESL/EFL textbooks equate *unless* with *if... not*. This is misleading, as Whitaker (1970), Quirk and Greenbaum (1973), and Dancygier (2002) have pointed out. We believe that Dancygier provides the best account to date for the two possible meanings of *unless* (i.e., “except if” and “if...not”). The first important point that she makes is that to arrive at the proper interpretation of *unless*, more context is needed beyond just the sentence containing the *unless* clause. While it would require a lengthy digression to explain Dancygier’s “mental spaces” framework here, we note she points out that in certain contexts, *unless* is paraphrasable as *except if* but not *if...not*, and in other contexts, the reverse is true. Dancygier gives the following example (p. 366):

[context: a car accident] **I know how it sounded, but really I am not mad, there was NOTHING that could have made her swerve to the side like that and hit the rock unless the steering rod is going.** (Susan Cooper, *The Grey King*, p. 13)

In this example, *unless* can be paraphrased as *except if* (except if the steering rod is going) but not *if...not* (*if the steering rod isn’t going). In the following example, the opposite paraphrase pattern occurs (Dancygier, 2002, p. 368):

“I have pulled my tail off,” replied the younger Mouse, “but as I should still be on the sorcerer’s table unless I had, I do not regret it.” (Andrew Lang, *Red Fairy Book*, Univ. of Virginia Electronic Text Center)

In this example, we can paraphrase *unless* as *if...not* (if I hadn’t [pulled my tail off]) but not *except if* (*except if I had [pulled my tail off]). A simplified version of the explanation that Dancygier gives is that the first context is hypothetical, and the *unless* clause offers a hypothetical reason for the accident. In the second context, the *unless* clause is counterfactual; i.e., the mouse had in fact pulled his tail off to get away from the sorcerer. For Dancygier (2002), “in such cases *if not* and *unless* are indeed similar, although it would be hard to claim that *if not* is equivalent to *unless*, because it lacks the exceptive meaning” (p. 374). She adds that *if not* is not always counterfactual, but that it is understood to be so in the absence of context that would yield a different interpretation. Thus we come back to her initial observation that the larger discourse context is needed to accurately interpret sentences containing *unless* clauses.⁹

Carter and McCarthy (2006) agree that *unless* has two paraphrases (i.e., *if...not* and *except if*).¹⁰ However, they also point out that there are many instances of *if...not* that cannot be paraphrased by *unless*—a point also made by Huddleston and Pullum (2002):

I think Dave would be happier if he didn’t work so hard.

(*I think Dave would be happier unless he worked so hard.)

Thus we conclude that ESL/EFL teachers should refrain from teaching that *unless* is the equivalent of *if...not* since the entire matter is rather complicated and requires authentic discourse-grounded examples that should be presented to learners who have a grasp of more straightforward conditional sentences.

Even Though versus Even If. Consider the following examples:

You should visit Vienna even though it is expensive.

You should visit Vienna even if it is expensive.

In the first sentence, the speaker knows that Vienna is expensive (i.e., the state of affairs exists) but advises that the addressee visit it despite the cost. In the second sentence, the speaker doesn't know definitely whether or not Vienna is expensive—there is a possibility that Vienna is expensive, but it also might not be (i.e., it is unclear whether or not the state of affairs exists)—but in any event, the advice is to visit the city.

Thus, *even though* expresses a concession. It is an emphatic form of *although*. *Even if* is conditional—in this case, an explicit inference conditional—and it is an emphatic counterpart to *if*.

As the following example demonstrates, *even if* can also function emphatically in hypothetical conditionals:

I wouldn't marry you if you were the last person on Earth!

I wouldn't marry you even if you were the last person on Earth!

Note that the *even if* clause can readily occur initially, but that, in the absence of extremely marked exclamatory intonation, the *if* clause is a bit strange if it occurs initially in this type of emphatic conditional:

?If you were the last person on Earth, I wouldn't marry you!

Even if you were the last person on Earth, I wouldn't marry you!

Thus it appears that we have identified a context in which the *if* clause is usually not in initial position. We will discuss some other cases later in this chapter in the section on use, where ordering of clauses seems critical.

Whether...Or Not. Thus far, we have examined sentences in which the adverb subordinator indicates that the condition is unmarked, exclusive, emphatic, negative, or exclusive and negative:

I will stay home if it rains. (unmarked)

I will stay home only if it rains. (exclusive)

I will stay home even if it rains. (emphatic)

I will stay home if it doesn't rain. (negative)

I will stay home unless it rains. (exclusive negative)

English has yet another adverb subordinator, *whether...or not*, which indicates that the condition can be explicitly eliminated from playing any role in determining the outcome expressed in the result clause. Thus we refer to such cases as *irrelevant conditions*:

I will stay home whether or not it rains.

Our reason for using three dots in the subheading to indicate the potential separation of *whether* and *or not* in irrelevant conditions is that in short irrelevant conditional clauses, the *or not* may also occur at the end of the clause, separated from the *whether*:

I will stay home whether it rains or not.

However, the longer the clause, the less likely such a separation becomes:

?I will stay home whether Professor Dickinson agrees to give the graduate students a lecture on plasma physics or not.

Note that informally, we can substitute *if* for *whether*, but only when separation occurs:

I will stay home if it rains or not. (*if or not it rains)

RELATED VERBS

Hope and Wish. The verb *hope* is similar to future (predictive) conditionals in that the same clauses that follow *hope* can also function either as the *if* clause or the result clause of a future conditional. For example:

I hope (that) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{John finishes his work} \\ \text{John will come} \end{array} \right\}$.

If John finishes his work, he will come.

Both of these sentences imply that it is possible that John will finish his work and that he will come.

The verb *wish*, on the other hand, is similar to counterfactual conditionals in that the same clauses that follow *wish* can also function either as the *if* clause or the result clause of a counterfactual conditional:

I wish (that) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{John had finished his work} \\ \text{John could have come} \end{array} \right\}$.

If John had finished his work, he could have come.

In these sentences, we know that John didn't finish his work and that he didn't come. Also, the subjunctive forms that occur in imaginative *if* clauses also occur after *wish*:

I wish I were a millionaire. If I were a millionaire...

Related to the verb *wish*, there is also the more formal and slightly archaic expression *would that*, which can be used in exclamatory imaginative conditionals to express wishes:

Would that I had a Rolls-Royce! Would that I could fly!
(I wish I had a Rolls-Royce!) (I wish I could fly!)

Imagine, Pretend, Suppose. Besides *hope* and *wish*, English uses several other verbs of imagination, such as *imagine*, *pretend*, and *suppose*, all of which should be included in a comprehensive description of imaginative clauses that have tense shifts like conditionals. Thewlis (2007) provides the following examples (p. 287):

Let's imagine that we had a new president. (present counterfactual)
Pretend that you could fly like a bird. (present counterfactual)
Suppose we went to Europe next summer. (future hypothetical)

OTHER WAYS OF MARKING CONDITONAL CLAUSES

Our description of conditionals has focused on clauses marked by *if* and certain related subordinators like *unless* and *only if*.

Other Words, Phrases, and Constructions/Formulaic Expressions That Signal Conditional Meaning

| <i>Words</i> | <i>Phrases</i> | <i>Constructions/Formulaic Expressions</i> |
|-------------------|----------------------|--|
| whatever | provided that | The more, the merrier. |
| who(m)ever | given that | To know him is to love him. |
| wherever | assuming that | Pay attention, or you will miss what is happening in the moment. |
| however | no matter wh- | |
| whenever | so/as long as | People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. (generic relative clause) |

| Words | Phrases | Constructions/Formulaic Expressions |
|------------------|---------------------------|--|
| whichever | on condition that | I hope that the party is Saturday, or otherwise we can't make it. |
| assuming | in the event that | |
| supposing | in the event of NP | |
| | suppose that | |

A comprehensive study of conditionals would account for these items and others, and show precisely what relationship they have to the conditional constructions discussed in this chapter.

Conditional Would/Could Clauses without If Clauses

Frazier (2003) examined a corpus of 467 hypothetical *would* clauses in spoken and written English and found that only 25 percent were linked to *if* clauses—21 percent to adjacent *if* clauses, 4 percent to nonadjacent *if* clauses. Of the remaining cases, 50 percent involved alternative constructions or connectors other than *if*, such as those we discussed in the previous chart; e.g.,

You could substitute anything in the Krebs cycle for pyruvate, and it would work.

Another 1 percent could not be classified, and the remaining 15 percent had no overt conditional clause at all; e.g.,

What would Abe Lincoln do?

In the first example, another construction expresses the conditional meaning (= *If you could substitute anything in the Krebs cycle for pyruvate, it would work.*) In the second example, the implied conditional *if* clause is something like: *If he were alive now,...*

The Frequency of Conditional Constructions

Hill (1960) has claimed that English conditional sentences may contain 324 (i.e., 18×18) distinct tense-modal sequences. However, Hwang (1979) analyzed a corpus of English speech (63,746 words) and writing (357,249 words) representing diverse discourse types and concluded that in addition to general rules of consistency in tense sequencing (e.g., *If* present, present; *If* past, past, etc.), only two statements can be made about ungrammatical forms in conditional sentences: (1) inferential uses of *might* do not occur in *if* clauses; and (2) subjunctive *were* and *were to* do not occur in result clauses:

?If it might rain, we will need our umbrellas.

***If the weather got too hot, I were sick.**

Hwang found that out of a total of about 70 distinct patterns, seven patterns accounted for two-thirds of the conditionals in her corpora. Furthermore, she found that these seven patterns—with minor ranking differences—were most frequent in both the spoken and the written corpus. The table shows the most important frequency data reported by Hwang (1979, p. 63).

A FREQUENCY RANKING OF CONDITIONAL SENTENCE TYPES

| Structure | <i>This Book's Terminology</i> | <i>Speech</i> (266 conditionals) | <i>Ranking</i> | <i>Writing</i> (948 conditionals) | <i>Ranking</i> |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| A: If + pres., pres. | generic factual | 51 (19.2%) | 1 | 156 (16.5%) | 1 |
| B: If + pres., will/be going to | future (predictive) | 29 (10.9%) | 2 | 118 (12.5%) | 2 |
| C: If + past, $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{would} \\ \text{might} \\ \text{could} \end{array} \right\}$ | present hypothetical or counterfactual | 27 (10.2%) | 3 | 95 (10%) | 4 |
| D: If + pres., $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{should} \\ \text{must} \\ \text{can} \\ \text{may} \end{array} \right\}$ | explicit inference factual or future with weakened result | 24 (9%) | 4 | 114 (12.1%) | 3 |
| E: If + $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{were} \\ \text{were to} \end{array} \right\}$, $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{would} \\ \text{could} \\ \text{might} \end{array} \right\}$ have | present or future hypothetical or present counterfactual | 23 (8.6%) | 5 | 57 (6%) | 6 |
| F: If + $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{had} + \text{-en} \\ \text{have} + \text{-en} \end{array} \right\}$, $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{would} \\ \text{could} \\ \text{might} \end{array} \right\}$ | past counterfactual | 10 (3.8%) | 6 | 31 (3.3%) | 7 |
| G: If + pres., $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{would} \\ \text{could} \\ \text{might} \end{array} \right\}$ | future with weakened result | 7 (2.6%) | 7 | 58 (6.1%) | 5 |

Although Hwang identified 45 additional structures for the spoken corpus and 57 more for the written one, these all occurred with frequencies lower than 2 percent except for the eighth-ranking structure in the written corpus, which occurred 21 times (i.e., 2.2 percent):

Structure H: ***If + -past, $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{would} \\ \text{could} \\ \text{might} \end{array} \right\} \text{have} + \text{-en}$*** ¹¹

Example: **If they were here longer, I could have introduced you to them.**

While it is impossible to compare Hwang's (1979) structures with our semantic taxonomy in any exact way, this table does show us that present tense factual conditionals (i.e., structure A) are by far the most frequent type of conditional sentence in both speech and writing. They are followed by the classic future conditional (structure B), which is also represented in weakened form at the bottom of the table (structure G). Present imaginative conditionals are represented in structures C and E,¹² and past counterfactuals are represented in structures F and H. Structure D seems to be a mixed bag, including both inferential factials (*must, should*) and weakened future conditionals (*can, may*).

We feel that Hwang's (1979) study indirectly validates our semantic taxonomy, and this assures us that we have indeed accounted for the most frequent conditional structures in English. More important, however, Hwang's study helps to establish more realistic priorities

for the ESL/EFL teacher. Present-tense factual conditionals should be taught first and introduced early, followed by future conditionals. Imaginative conditionals should be taught at a later time—after students have learned enough about perfect tenses, modals, and negation to provide the proper syntactic and semantic foundation for using such structures.

The Uses of Conditional Sentences

SENTENCE-INITIAL CONDITIONALS

According to Ford and Thompson (1986), who did a corpus analysis of conditionals in English, sentences with initial *if* clauses account for almost 80 percent of conditionals. These sentence-initial conditionals perform four functions in both oral and written discourse. In order of frequency, these functions are (1) to propose options for future scenarios, (2) to introduce contrasts, (3) to provide examples following generalizations, and (4) to make inferences based on previously mentioned assumptions.

Let us examine discourse segments illustrating each of these uses as well as two others.

Proposing Options for Future Scenarios

[from a phone call discussing the fact that B will be visiting his sister V]

B: I'll probably leave there, at the latest ten ... so I'll probably be there at your place, at the latest midnight.

V: Okay, well if I go to bed, I'm gonna leave the door open.

B: Oh okay.

V: Okay? Cause I usually go to bed early.

[adapted from Ford and Thompson (1986)]

In this oral segment, V uses a future conditional, "...if I go to bed, I'm gonna leave the door open," to tell her brother what the scenario will be if he arrives late, after she has gone to bed early.

Introducing Contrasts

There is another intellectual virtue, which is that of generality or impartiality... When, in elementary algebra, you do problems about A, B, and C going up a mountain, you have no emotional interest in the gentlemen concerned, and you do your best to work out the solution with impersonal correctness. But if you thought that A was yourself, B your hated rival, and C the schoolmaster who set the problem, your calculations would go askew, and you would be sure to find that A was first and C was last. [Russell (1950, p. 31), cited in Ford and Thompson (1986)]

In this text, Bertrand Russell uses a present hypothetical conditional preceded by *but* (a typically co-occurring connector) to propose the contrasting set of circumstances. In other words, he introduces hypothetical emotional involvement, in contrast to the unemotional impartiality that is expressed earlier in timeless simple present tense, to show that impartial logic cannot prevail under such emotion-filled circumstances.

Providing Examples Following Generalizations

Any solution ... acid, base, or salt ... will act chemically more readily on one electrode than it will on the other. For example, if electrodes are placed into an orange, a potential difference will appear between electrodes. [Randall (1968, p. 47), cited in Ford and Thompson (1986, p. 358)]

Here, the future conditional sentence is preceded by the connector *for example* and serves to present a specific illustration of the generalization stated in the immediately preceding sentence.

Making Inferences Based on Previously Mentioned Assumptions

A: Joyce went there last night.

B: Well, if Joyce went there, she saw what happened.

In this segment, speaker B uses a past factual conditional in the *if* clause to reiterate the information previously mentioned by speaker A in order to make an inference in the result clause based on that prior information.

Presentation and Development of Arguments

Biber et al. (1999) point out that initial *if* clauses are important in the presentation and development of arguments in academic prose (p. 824). For example:

If aggression and violence are part and parcel of what it means to be human, then why is it that there exist societies where aggressive or violent behavior is conspicuous by its absence?

Presenting Options in Procedures

Biber et al. (1999) also point out that initial *if* clauses are used in academic prose to present options and their meanings, especially in the course of explaining procedures (p. 837):

The melting point is determined. If it is not sharp and is lower than that of the two separate samples, then the samples are not identical. If, on the other hand, the melting point is sharp and is not lowered, then the two samples are identical.

USES OF INITIAL *IF* CLAUSES AS SPEECH ACTS IN ORAL DISCOURSE

Sentence-initial *if* clauses have several speech act functions in oral discourse that one rarely finds in written discourse (unless the writing is simulating oral discourse, as fiction often does). Here are some of the most common speech acts:

Using If Clauses in Polite Directives

[tour guide to the people on her bus]

TG: If you look out the left side, you'll see Mann's Chinese Theater. You'll have a chance to walk back there and take photos in a few minutes.

Using *if* conditions to present directives can be viewed as polite in that, like a suggestion, it leaves the option of performing the condition to the listener.

Using If Clauses in Polite Requests

In polite requests, the sentence structure is often incomplete, with the *if* clause standing alone:

If I could just have your attention for a moment...

If you would just hold the door open while I move this chair...

Using If Conditionals to Speak Humorously or Sarcastically

Conditionals are often used for humorous or sarcastic purposes:

If he's a Rhodes Scholar, then I'm Albert Einstein!

If you had half a brain, you'd be dangerous.

Tautologisms—where the same words are repeated in both clauses—are a special subcategory of this case:

If she's not coming, she's not coming!

In these examples, initial position of the *if* clause is virtually obligatory since much of the humor or sarcasm would be lost if the two clauses were reversed; and the tautologism seems completely unacceptable if reversed:

***She's not coming if she's not coming.**

Sentence-Initial If Clauses in Other Speech Acts

A few other such speech act conditionals are:

Offer: **If I can help you in any way, just let me know.**

Command: **If you're not here to help, please leave!**

Apology: **If I've unintentionally offended you, I'm very sorry.**

Evaluation: **If you get backaches all the time, it's probably because you've got bad posture.**

Warning: **Unless the flow of drugs across the border is stopped, the cartels will continue their criminal activities.**

USES OF SENTENCE-FINAL IF CLAUSES

Only 23 percent of the *if* clauses in Ford and Thompson's (1986) written corpus were in final position. They found that the following three observations accounted for most of their sentence-final *if* clauses:

1. When a conditional clause occurs within a complement, a nominalization, an infinitive, or a relative clause, it tends to occur in final position; for example:

I agree with Johnson's observation that it would be difficult to understand the Gettysburg Address if it were presented one word at a time. [adapted from Ford & Thompson (1986, p. 359)]

2. English speakers sometimes prefer to introduce strong arguments and interesting topics in the main clause, which may necessitate final position for the subordinate conditional clause; for example:

The Soviet government would have been less fierce if it had met with less hostility in its first years. [Russell (1950, p. 109), cited in Ford and Thompson (1986, p. 360)]

3. Long and involved *if* clauses tend to occur in final position; for example:

... Lana [a chimpanzee] would not receive any apple if she pressed such incorrect sequences as: please machine apple give or machine please give apple. [Terrace (1979, p. 24), cited in Ford and Thompson (1986, p. 361)]

Even fewer (i.e., 18 percent) of the *if* clauses in the oral corpus were noninitial than in the written corpus. Many of the examples could be explained with reference to the observations cited previously for written discourse; however, in oral discourse, Ford and Thompson found that sentence-final conditionals also fulfill some other functions.

To Function as Afterthoughts or Reminders

Sentence-final *if* clauses (or *unless* clauses) functioned as afterthoughts or reminders, and these could come from the interlocutor, as well as occurring in a continuation by the same speaker:

Student: Is it practically impossible to have that? [a certain demand curve]

Instructor: If you have this base.

To Soften an Imperative

Sometimes final oral *if* clauses are used deferentially to soften an imperative:

Let's do the dishes later, *if that's okay with you*.

To Follow an Evaluation

Sometimes *if* clauses follow an evaluation that the speaker presents first for emphasis:

I think it would be a lot better *if you came after all*.

To Follow With a Question

Perhaps one of the most interesting observations made by Ford and Thompson is that 19 percent of final (but only 5 percent of initial) *if* clauses occur with questions in the result clause:

Well, why doesn't he say something, *if he has a solution*?

Ford and Thompson suggest that these post-question conditional clauses may be functionally related to the “afterthought, reminder” type of conditionals described previously. Other speech-act type functions of final (*only*) *if* (or *unless*) clauses include the following:

To Give Advice or Instructions

**Don't sign up for English 120A *unless you've already taken English 120*.
Take Symbolic Logic *only if you're willing to work very hard for a B*.**

To Impose Restrictions

You can go out with your friends *only if you get back by midnight*.

THE CONTEXT-SPECIFIC NATURE OF *IF* CONDITIONALS

O'Keeffe, McCarthy, and Carter (2007) report on research by Farr and McCarthy (2002), who examined the use of *if* clauses in a 60,000-word corpus of post-observation teacher training interactions. Of the 160 uses of *if* clauses, there were 30 distinct patterns, the majority of which did not match the three traditional types of *if* clauses discussed at the outset of this chapter. Instead, the researchers found that two types of *if* conditions seemed salient and highly relevant to the type of communication recorded and transcribed.

Many of the trainers' *if* clauses were used to soften imperatives or directives addressed to the trainees, a function that we noted previously in the speech acts. For example:

Bite your tongue a little *if you have to*. (O'Keeffe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007, p. 128)

If you're teaching that class, don't feel obliged to explain everything. (O'Keeffe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007, p. 129)

Other *if* clauses from this corpus showed the trainers putting themselves in their trainees' shoes:

If I were to do this exercise, I would approach it from an elicitation point of view.

If I were to do it, I would go with giving good clear instructions. (O'Keeffe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007, p. 129)

These examples indicate that the purpose-driven nature of these interactions, in which the trainers are giving feedback and guidance to teacher trainees, dictated, to a large degree, the type of *if* conditionals that were used.

An example from Lerner (1995) illustrates that classroom teachers often use conditionals when asking their pupils to solve a hypothetical problem, such as a mathematical word problem, but often with material about other subjects as well (p. 124):

Simson [teacher]: If you were big...bigger than anybody in the whole classroom, how could you solve that problem?

We have observed teachers engaging students in discussions of problems and dilemmas using *What...if* questions:

What would you do if you found a lot of money on the street?

Or, more simply:

What if you found a lot of money on the street?

When Then Is Used in Conditionals With Initial If Clauses

Dancygier and Sweetser (1997) are among the few linguists who have given consideration to the use of *then* following initial *if* clauses. As we noted earlier, this type of *then* does not occur when the *if* clause follows the result clause. For Dancygier and Sweetser, this use of *then* is related to its basic temporal deictic sense, which refers not only to the temporal setting, but also the abstract mental spaces established in the preceding *if* clause. They claim that *then* is both anaphoric (in that it refers back to the *if* clause) and connecting (in that it serves as a sequential link between the two clauses).

Dancygier and Sweetser note that *then* occurs only if premises are explicitly identified in the *if* clause and, as a result, reasoning and inference occur in the main clause. They propose that *then* is likely in what they call “epistemic conditionals,” where such inferences occur:

If he bought her a diamond ring, then he must love her.

We had noted earlier in our initial taxonomy of conditional sentences that explicit inference conditionals, which appear to correspond to the researchers’ epistemic conditionals, were likely environments for the occurrence of *then*.

They also note that a negative mental state in the *if* clause that yields a negative outcome in the result clause is another environment that permits *then*:

If you don’t have the qualifications, then you won’t get the job.

They further point out that exploring alternative outcomes in the context of counterfactual conditionals is another context where we can expect *then* to occur:

If she had prepared better, then she might have passed the exam.

To Dancygier and Sweetser’s possibilities we would add the sarcastic conditionals we discussed earlier:

If he’s a Rhodes scholar, then I’m Albert Einstein!

They give consideration as well to those cases where *then* cannot occur. They include all speech act conditionals where the main clause cannot be inferred as the outcome of the *if* clause:

If it’s not rude to ask, (*then) how old are you?

If you need any help, (*then) my name is Susie.

Another instance where Dancygier and Sweetser state that *then* is not a good fit are the generic conditionals (our generic factual and generic habitual conditionals). This is because of the specific nature of *then*:

If water is boiled, (?then) it evaporates.

If Gladys cries, (?then) Sam is sad.

Finally, they claim that when the initial condition is marked by *even if* or *only if*, *then* does not occur because it clashes semantically with these connectors:

Even if it snows, (*then) the football game will be played.

Only if it's sunny, (*then) will I visit you.

Dancygier and Sweetser have given us a good start on this topic. However, an extensive corpus analysis would be helpful in showing us exactly when and why *then* is likely to occur (or not occur) in conditional sentences.

Conclusion

We are the first to admit that one could say much more about conditional sentences in English; however, we think that the analysis in this chapter has covered the essentials and has shown that these structures are used in a vast array of contexts, ranging from scientific and mathematical writing to polite directives, verbal insults, and other functions in informal conversation. Hwang (1979) points out that in her corpora, conditional sentences were more frequent in speech (4.2 per 1,000 words) than in writing (2.7 per 1,000 words). This ratio is confirmed by Ford and Thompson (1986), who found twice as many conditionals occurring per 1,000 words in their oral corpus than in their written one. It is also partly confirmed by Biber et al. (1999), who found that conditionals were most frequent in conversation and moderately frequent in academic prose. This high proportion of conditionals in spoken language is true no doubt because spoken English uses conditionals for sarcasm, insults, politeness/deference, and many other affectively loaded social functions and speech acts, as well as using them for the more straightforward inferential and hypothetical functions that predominate in the written language.

It should be obvious from our discussion that conditionals are too vast a topic for any ESL/EFL teacher to cover with one class at one level. Therefore, if you are teaching conditionals, it is important that you teach your students those conditional sentences that they are prepared to handle—both structurally and semantically. If you don't present too much information at once, and if you always present and practice conditionals in realistic contexts, you will be able to avoid many of the problems that learners typically experience with conditionals. (Note all the conditionals that we have used in this closing paragraph!)

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form/Meaning.** The factual generic conditional, which is often used to express physical laws, is important for students majoring in the sciences. If the condition is satisfied, the result is automatic. Note that the simple present tense is used in both clauses—that is, without modals; for example:

If you lower the temperature of water to 0°C, it freezes.

If you raise the temperature of water to 100°C, it boils.

Given the following conditions and results, have groups of students first match the appropriate A and B items and then generate all the possible factual generic conditional sentence(s):

A: Conditions

fly west/east

mix milk with lemon juice

pour oil on water

B: Results

it curdles

it floats

you lose/gain time

Example: If you fly west, you gain time.

2. **Form/Meaning.** As well as expressing general truths, factual conditionals may also deal with inferences based on the speaker's prior knowledge. The frequent use of *should* and *must* in such result clauses reinforces their inferential nature; for example:

If it's 10:30, then Philip (is/must be) taking a coffee break.

Given part of Philip's daily schedule, make inferences about what he is doing based on the time:

- 6:30 A.M. — get up
- 7:00 A.M. — read the newspaper, have coffee
- 8:00 A.M. — go to work; sell furniture
- 10:30 A.M. — coffee break
- 1:00–2:00 P.M. — lunch
- 5:00 P.M. — go home
- 6:00 P.M. — eat dinner
- 7:00 P.M. — watch TV

Example: If it's 7 A.M., Philip must be { having coffee. }
 { reading the paper. }

This exercise can also be reversed so that the class can make inferences about the time based on what Philip is doing; for example:

If Philip is reading the newspaper, it must be 7 A.M.

3. **Form/Meaning.** The future or predictive conditional is often used to make plans for the future based on various contingencies. One good context for introducing this structure is a chart with information about pupils: their names, their grades. These pupils will either (a) pass, (b) fail, or (c) skip a grade at the end of the school year. The class can practice all the logical possibilities.

| Pupil | Current Grade | Possibilities at End of Year | Grade Next Year |
|-------|---------------|---|-----------------|
| Sam | 5 | { Pass (normal promotion) Fail "flunks" (no promotion) Skip (double promotion) } | ? |
| Sally | 4 | | |
| Kurt | 3 | | |
| Edith | 6 | | |

Example:

Teacher: What will happen if Sam passes?

Student 1: If Sam passes, he will be in grade 6 next year.

Teacher: What if he flunks?

Student 2: If Sam flunks, he will still be in grade 5 next year.

Teacher: What if he skips a grade?

Student 3: If Sam skips a grade, he will be in grade 7 next year.

4. **Form/Meaning.** We use a past habitual conditional to talk about past habits or fixed past schedules that are no longer true. In this context, *if* becomes similar to *when* or *whenever*,

although it is never exactly the same as *when(ever)*. The following exercise can bring out this similarity.

Mr. Nelson, a retired high school history teacher, thinks about his experiences. He worked with many different types of students and had to handle many different situations:

- a. a bright class . . . make lessons challenging
- b. a slow class . . . present the basic facts carefully
- c. an exceptionally intelligent student . . . give special attention
- d. a student with behavior problems . . . contact the parents
- e. a student with a physical disability . . . treat as abled

Describe what Mr. Nelson did over the years; for example:

If }
When } Mr. Nelson had a bright class, he made his lessons challenging.

5. **Form/Meaning.** The present counterfactual conditional (impossible, subjunctive) uses past tense and a special subjunctive form:

(If + $\left. \begin{array}{l} I \\ she \\ he \end{array} \right\}$ were X, ...)

This is a common and frequent construction and should be practiced in a variety of contexts:

- a. Have pairs of students work at imagining that they are famous contemporary people and describing what they would or could do if they were these people. The teacher can provide cue cards with pictures of famous people, and students can make up sentences; for example:

If I were the president, I would/could...

Have pairs of students imagine that they have something that they don't really have, or can do something that they really can't do. For example:

If I had a million dollars, I would/could...

If I $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{could fly} \\ \text{flew} \end{array} \right\}$, I would...

- b. To make the situation emphatically counterfactual (completely imaginary), Barbara Hawkins suggests that the teacher prepare cue cards with pictures of animals and objects—one for each student or, alternatively, five or six that the whole class can choose from. Then each student should imagine that he or she is the animal or object in question and write as many sentences as possible, which can then form the basis of a short composition. This would work well with young learners.

Example:

If I were an eagle, I would be able to fly very high in the sky.

6. **Form/Meaning.** Many popular songs and folk songs use the imaginative present conditional. The ESL/EFL teacher can take advantage of this by teaching the lyrics and having the class sing one of these songs to introduce or reinforce the pattern:

"If I Had a Hammer"

"If I Were a Carpenter"

"If I Were a Rich Man"

"If I Had the Wings of an Angel"

7. **Form/Meaning.** For practicing past counterfactuals, use the concept of “hindsight.” Have each student imagine himself or herself to be a famous person (now deceased) and describe what they would have done or would not have done; for example:

If I had been Napoleon, I would not have fought the British at Waterloo.

8. **Form/Meaning.** To contextualize past counterfactuals, have the class talk about Harry and everything that went wrong for him yesterday.

“Harry’s Bad Day”

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| a. Harry did not get up on time. | → | He had to rush to get to work. |
| b. He was in a hurry. | → | He did not lock his door properly. |
| c. He did not catch his bus. | → | He was late for work. |
| d. Harry’s boss was angry. | → | The boss fired Harry. |
| e. A burglar entered Harry’s apartment. | → | All of Harry’s belongings were stolen. |

Have students work in pairs and write out all the things that might have happened/not have happened if Harry had had a better day yesterday; for example:

If Harry had gotten up on time, he would not have had to rush to get to work.

If Harry had locked his door properly, the burglar would not have entered his apartment.

9. **Meaning.** The following exercises contain suggestions for teaching *unless* and *only if*:
- a. Make your students aware of the fact that *unless* is frequently used along with negative imperatives if the speaker is giving an ultimatum or a warning. The *unless* precedes the condition that is necessary for neutralizing the negation in the imperative; for example:

Don’t run in a marathon unless you run long distances regularly.

(affirmative implication: If you run long distances regularly, you can run in a marathon.)

Have your students advise each other not to do the following things unless a necessary condition—which they are to specify—is met. Have them also indicate what the affirmative implication is in each case.

| | |
|--|--|
| apply for admission to graduate school | go to a party the night before an exam |
| join the army | open up a restaurant |
| accept a job in Alaska | work for a low salary |

Example:

Don’t apply for admission to graduate school unless you have at least a 3.25 GPA and good GRE scores.

(affirmative implication: If you have at least a 3.25 GPA and good GRE scores, you can apply for admission to graduate school.)

- b. You can familiarize your students with the use of *only if* by referring to the same situations listed previously. Emphasize that although the advice is overtly positive in this case, the implication is negative; that is, if the necessary condition is not met, the advice in the result clause no longer applies; for example:

You (can/should) apply for admission to graduate school, only if you have at least a 3.25 undergraduate GPA and good GRE scores.

(negative implication: If you don’t have at least a 3.25 undergraduate GPA and good GRE scores, don’t apply for admission to graduate school.)

- c. At some point, your students also need to understand that an *unless* clause can be used with an affirmative result clause, too. This is particularly true if future plans are being discussed; for example:

We will vacation in Hawaii unless our schedule changes between now and May.

(implication: We expect to vacation in Hawaii, but our schedule might change between now and May. If it does, we won't go; but we expect to go.)

Have your students make up their own sentences using *unless* clauses with the plans here to express the idea that other things could intervene. Have them paraphrase their sentences to show the implication, too.

I'll see you next Sunday.

I will withdraw from my physics class.

Let's plan on going to the movies this weekend.

Gary will travel to Europe in July.

Sylvia is going to work part time at a restaurant.

Example:

I'll see you next Sunday unless I have too much homework to do.

(implication: I'll see you next Sunday, though I may have too much homework to do, and if I do, I won't see you.)

10. **Use.** Give your students these sentences from airline discourse. See if they can figure out what speech act each refers to.

- a. This plane is going to Omaha. If Omaha isn't your destination, please deplane.
- b. If there is a loss of cabin pressure, an oxygen mask will drop from the ceiling.
- c. If there is any way that we can make your trip more enjoyable today, please ask.
- d. If the seatbelt light comes on, please return to your seats immediately.
- e. If I could have your attention for a moment...

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. *Provide example sentences that illustrate the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your example.*
 - a. factual conditional
 - (i.) generic
 - (ii.) implicit inference
 - b. future conditional
 - (i.) weakened result clause
 - (ii.) weakened *if* clause
 - c. counterfactual conditional
 - d. contrastive use of a conditional
 - e. subjunctive use of *were*
 - f. *if* deletion with subject/auxiliary inversion
 - g. conditional clause pro-form
 - h. sarcastic use of conditional
 - i. hypothetical conditional

2. Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences:
 - a. If I had the time, I would go to Europe.
 - b. If John had studied, then he would have received an A.
 - c. I will not stay at the meeting if I see him.
 - d. Don't go for an interview unless you want the job.
3. Why are the following sentences ungrammatical (or at best awkward)?
 - a. *If she had been there, she did the work.
 - b. ?If John might be free, I'll invite him.
 - c. ?Sally's bringing Harry to the party if she's bringing Harry to the party!
 - d. ?Then he'll keep his word if he made a promise.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

4. If your students produce the following, how will you make them aware of the correct forms of conditionals, and what exercises and activities will you provide to practice them?
 - a. *What happens if I pushed this button?
 - b. *Why had some Americans said, "Gesundheit," if someone sneezes?
 - c. *Only if you help me, I will study for the quiz.
5. One of your advanced students has heard native speakers say conditionals like these, and he or she wants to know whether they are correct or not. What will you say?
 - a. If I was the Dalai Lama, I'd do the same thing.
 - b. I would be less nervous if you would stop staring at me.
6. Use the semantic description of conditionals provided in this chapter and decide where a sentence such as the following one belongs:

If the gardener doesn't come tomorrow, Father will have to mow the lawn.
7. Select a passage or article and identify all the conditional sentences. Try to account for the sentences using the semantic taxonomy provided in this chapter. Are there any sentences that cannot be explained according to the taxonomy? If so, try to provide your own analysis or explanation of the sentence(s).

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For useful general information on conditional sentences, see:

- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman grammar of spoken and written English*. Harlow, Essex, England: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. (2006). *Cambridge grammar of English*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
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- Quirk, R.; Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London, England: Longman.

For cross-linguistic, cross-disciplinary accounts of conditionals, see:

Jackson, F. (Ed.). (1991). *Conditionals*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Traugott, E., ter Meulen, A., Reilly, J. S., & Ferguson, C. A. (Eds.). (1986). *On conditionals*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Athanasiadou, A., & Dirven, R. (Eds.). (1997). *On conditionals again*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

For excellent suggestions for teaching *hope* and *wish*, as well as conditional sentences, see:

Houck, N., & Hilles, S. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 4*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For units and lessons that introduce factual conditionals to high-beginner ESL/EFL students, see:

Badalamenti, V., & Henner-Stanchina, C. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 1* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Firsten, R. (2008). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 2*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For a unit that introduces hypothetical (present and past) and future conditionals to low-intermediate ESL/EFL learner, see:

Wisniewska, I., Riggenbach, H., & Samuda, V. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 2* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For a unit that contrasts real and hypothetical conditionals for intermediate learners, see:

Thewlis, S. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 3* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For a review of conditionals for advanced students, plus exercises dealing with *only if*, *unless*, *even though*, *even if*, see:

Frodesen, J., & Eyring, J. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 4* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Cake, C. D. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 5*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Endnotes

1. The five most serious problems were ranked as follows:

1. articles
2. prepositions
3. phrasal verbs
4. verbals (infinitives, gerunds, participles)
5. conditionals

2. Hwang (1979) demonstrates that many ESL/EFL students cannot produce or interpret these simple, present-tense conditionals as well as they can future conditionals—very probably as a result of incomplete and misleading instruction.

3. We are indebted to Schachter (1971) both for the term *imaginative* and also for much of the following description and terminology.

4. In colloquial North American English, such an *if* clause sometimes contains a *would*:

If Joe would have the time, he would go to Mexico.

This results in a double *would* construction, which many prescriptive usage manuals rule out as unacceptable in formal English. However, we wish to point out that double *would* conditionals do occur increasingly in informal spoken and written English.

5. Hwang (1979) demonstrates that ESL/EFL students confuse hypothetical and counterfactual conditionals and cannot interpret them properly, even when they are able to select the correct form on

a multiple-choice test item. Many students interpret hypotheticals as if they were counterfactuals—thus ignoring a subtle but important semantic distinction in English.

6. See Harsh (1968) for a comprehensive description of the subjunctive in English.
7. In colloquial English, *was* in fact often occurs in such imaginative conditional sentences in lieu of *were*.
8. Note that when the *only if* clause is fronted, this forces subject/operator inversion in the main clause:

Only if it rains, $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{will I stay home.} \\ \text{*I will stay home.} \end{array} \right.$

We believe that this occurs because of the negative implication that *only if* conveys as part of its exclusive meaning; i.e., no other condition will bring about the stated result.

9. All of Dancygier's (2002) data come from fiction, so a more comprehensive study of *unless* using other corpora with other registers is warranted. Biber et al. (1999) report that *unless* occurred 200 times per million words in fiction and news reports but less than 100 times per million words in conversation and academic writing, so fiction, along with news reports, may indeed be a good source for tokens of *unless* (p. 842).
10. Carter and McCarthy (2006) are less categorical than Dancygier (2002) about the two paraphrases of *unless*, and they give examples suggesting that while sometimes *if...not* is the preferred paraphrase, at other times *except if* is the preferred paraphrase, and at still other times both paraphrases seem possible. This may be a result of considering sentences out of context, or it more likely suggests that further research with more data is needed.
11. Note that this structure is very likely a simplification of structure F:

$(\text{if} + \text{had} + \text{-en}, \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{would} \\ \text{could} \\ \text{might} \end{array} \right\} \text{have} + \text{-en})$

(e.g., *If he had arrived late, he might have been punished.*)

The simple past is replacing the past perfect in the *if* clause.

12. Structure E contains *were to* as well as *were*, which means that future hypotheticals are included here, too.

Introduction to Relative Clauses

CHAPTER

28

Introduction

Not only are relative clauses very common modifiers in English, but their forms, meanings, and uses are quite varied within and across spoken and written registers. The following examples from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) illustrate the diversity of relative clause types and their positions in sentences:

You don't forget the person *who introduced you to your first love*. (*Psychology Today*, May/June 2012)

All caregivers were familiar with the resident *whom they assisted*. (*Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research*, April 2012)

These are the people *with whom he studied*... (*Commentary*, 2011)

Authors *whose manuscripts are accepted for publication* must supply illustrations that are of professional quality... (*Geographical Review*, January 2012)

That is something *which we are told happens every time there is any significant storm*. (CNN, 2005)

But the point *that I think is important here, there's really two things*. (*CBS This Morning*, 2012)

That's the thing *I was thinking*. (*The Today Show*, 2012)

Teachers may need to address English learner errors such as the following, which may result from a variety of sources: cross-linguistic influence, misunderstanding of relative clause functions, or simply a developing knowledge of complex sentence structure:

*I talked to the teacher *which is in Room 214*.

*We had sushi for lunch *which it was very good*.

*My roommate *comes from Iran* is friendly.

In the first ungrammatical example above, the relative pronoun *which* has been inappropriately used to modify a noun with a human reference. In the second example, the personal pronoun *it* has been incorrectly retained after the relative pronoun *which*. And in the third example, the obligatory subject relative pronoun (*who*) is missing from the embedded clause *comes from Iran*.

We begin our description of the relative clause construction by defining it as a type of adjective modifier that occurs after nouns—or more formally, a complex postnominal adjectival modifier. Consider the following example from COCA:

Tucson is a city *that is unique for its diversity and its passion*. (*Fox News*, 2011)

In this example, the italicized relative clause describes Tucson.

In English, it would be very awkward, even ungrammatical, to convey the same information using a phrase that comes before the noun (an attributive adjective):

***Tucson is a unique for its diversity and its passion city.**

It would be possible, but more wordy and less elegant, to express the same information as two independent clauses:

Tucson is a type of city; it is unique for its diversity and its passion.

Relative clauses thus give us a means to describe NPs in complex adjectival modifiers that are easier to process than complex attributive structures in front of NPs and that are less wordy than two independent clauses.

The Form of Relative Clauses

A relative clause derives from a basic structure consisting of more than one sentence.

So far, you have seen two types of sentence that have two or more basic structures. In Chapter 6, and then again in Chapter 25, we showed that one basic structure sentence could be subordinated to another when preceded by an adverb subordinator; for example:

The baby walked before she crawled.

(S1 + adv sub + S2)

This subordinate structure was also used to derive some of the conditional sentences in the preceding chapter.

In Chapter 24, we analyzed sentences with two or more basic structures sentences that are conjoined; for example:

The rain finally stopped, and the sun came out.

(S1 + conj + S2)

The basic structural relationship among the sentences that we consider in this chapter differs from that of subordinating or coordinating conjunction. The relationship here derives from a process called *embedding*. In this process, one clause is placed *within* another higher-order or superordinate (main) clause. This embedded clause becomes a part of the main clause.

For example:

The fans [who were attending the concert] had to wait in line for three hours.

NP

S

Here, we see that the embedded clause *who were attending the concert* is closely associated with the head NP, *the fans*. In fact, *who* is a relative pronoun in the embedded clause referring to *the fans*. The embedded clause has a modifying function much like an adjective; it tells us which “fans” had to wait in a long line. Such clauses are often called “restrictive,” (or in some grammars “defining,” “limiting,” “essential,” or “adjective” clauses). In most cases, these clauses restrict or identify for us which noun(s) of all nouns in the same set we are speaking about (in this example, people who could be called “fans”).

RELATIVIZATION: NOUN PHRASE ACCESSIBILITY

While many languages have relative clause structures, these languages may differ from English in the extent to which noun phrases can be replaced by relative pronouns in certain syntactic positions. As one example, some languages do not allow a relative pronoun to replace an NP that is the object of a preposition as English does (e.g., *The book to which she referred has been on the bestseller list for six months*). For English learners, challenges may arise based on such cross-linguistic differences as well as, of course, the absence of relative clause constructions in their native languages. For teachers of English as a second language, it is helpful to understand the differences across languages.

An explanation of how languages do or do not allow NPs to be relativized (i.e., to be modified by a restrictive relative clause) has been posited by Keenan and Comrie (1977) in their “noun phrase accessibility hierarchy.” In this hierarchy, NPs that are most accessible to being relativized are at the top, with the least accessible type at the bottom. The chart here illustrates this, along with examples of each type.

| CROSS-LINGUISTIC NOUN PHRASE ACCESSIBILITY HIERARCHY | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; margin-right: 10px;">Most Accessible</div> <div style="flex-grow: 1; border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; position: relative;"> <div style="position: absolute; top: -10px; left: 50%; transform: translate(-50%, -50%);">↑</div> <div style="position: absolute; bottom: -10px; left: 50%; transform: translate(-50%, -50%);">↓</div> </div> </div> | subject NP | The book <i>that is on the coffee table</i> arrived today. |
| | direct object NP | The story <i>that she told</i> is a well-known fable. |
| | indirect object NP | The man { <i>to whom they gave the award</i> is a firefighter. <i>who they gave the award to</i> is a local hero. |
| | object of the preposition NP | The child { <i>from whom you took the candy</i> is crying. <i>who you took the candy from</i> is crying. |
| | genitive (i.e., possessive) NP | The advisor <i>whose name you asked for</i> is Sarah North. |
| | object NP of a comparison | ?The only person <i>that I was shorter than</i> was Fritz. *The only person <i>than whom I was shorter</i> was Fritz. |
| Least Accessible | | |

As illustrated here, the accessibility hierarchy claims that cross-linguistically, subject NPs are easier to relativize than direct object NPs, which in turn are easier to relativize than indirect object NPs, and so on. This means that all languages that have relative clauses can relativize subject NPs. It also implies that there are some languages, such as Tagalog, that can only relativize subjects (or topics). Furthermore, it posits that languages like Slovenian that can relativize the least accessible type, object NPs of comparisons, can also relativize the other five types of NPs that are more accessible. English has a rich system of relativization with almost no restrictions on the kind of NPs that can be relativized or replaced by a relative pronoun in the embedded clause. As shown in the chart, the only marginal NP function for relativization in English is the “object NP of a comparison,” in which the first example might be unacceptable to some speakers and the second is ungrammatical. This means that speakers of languages with more restrictions on relativization, such as Tagalog, Malay, and Indonesian, which allow only subjects (or topics) to be relativized, may have difficulty with the variety of NPs that can be relativized in English.

CHALLENGES FOR ESL/EFL STUDENTS

In identifying the challenges that students may encounter learning English relative clauses, it is useful to consider the ways in which their native languages may construct relative clauses differently or, in some cases, may use other types of structures for the same purpose. Schachter (1974), identifies three main dimensions along which relative clauses can differ (pp. 202–208). In the following three sections, we summarize Schachter’s analysis related to the three dimensions and note some of the differences across languages described in Swan and Smith (2001).

Positions of Relative Clauses

One of the main differences between languages is the positioning of relative clauses in relation to the head noun being modified. English relative clauses, as shown in the examples in the previous hierarchy, follow the head noun. This structural pattern is the same for relative clauses in most European languages and also in Arabic and Farsi. In some languages (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Turkish), however, constructions that serve the function of English relative clauses appear before the head noun they modify. (Thompson, 2001).

Marking of Relative Clauses

Another difference that we find across languages is the ways in which relative clauses are marked. While English uses a relative pronoun (for example, *who* or *which*), Schachter (1974) points out that languages such as Persian, Arabic, and Chinese employ other kinds of markers between the head noun and the relative clause. For these speakers, the concept of having some construction mark the relative clause should be somewhat familiar. Japanese, on the other hand, uses particles in the relative clause itself to mark its modifier function. Thompson (2001) notes that Japanese learners of English may experience difficulty in using relative pronouns for this reason.

Presence or Absence of a Pronominal Reflex

In English relative clauses, the relative pronoun substitutes for the NP with identical reference in the embedded sentences. For example, in the following sentence:

Shirley called out to the boy that she knew.

the *that* replaces *the boy* in the embedded sentence. Other languages—for instance, Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian—introduce a relative clause marker for the embedded sentence but also retain a marker to refer to the head noun in the form of a pronominal reflex. As a result, speakers of these languages often produce errors in English such as the following:

***Shirley called out to the boy that she knew *him*.**

Chinese and Arabic also allow pronominal reflexes to occur as objects of prepositions; so speakers of these languages sometimes produce English sentences such as the following:

***The man *who you were talking to* *him* is my uncle.**

English Relative Clause Types

There is a great diversity in English relative clause types. In the following sections, we will be describing the roles that relative clauses serve in relation to the main clause (e.g., as modifiers of main clause subjects or objects), as well as the syntactic roles of the relative pronouns in the embedded relative clauses.

In the subheadings below with hyphenated labels, it may be helpful to keep in mind that the first syntactic role refers to the NP in the superordinate (main) clause, while the second syntactic role identifies the function of the NP in the embedded (relative) clause. For example, “object-subject” means that the relative clause modifies a main clause object; the relative pronoun is the subject of the embedded relative clause.

THE RELATIVIZATION OF THE SUBJECT IN THE EMBEDDED SENTENCE

Subject-Subject Relatives

We will first consider sentences in which the subject of the embedded sentence becomes relativized. Consider the following sentence:

The girl who speaks Basque is my cousin.

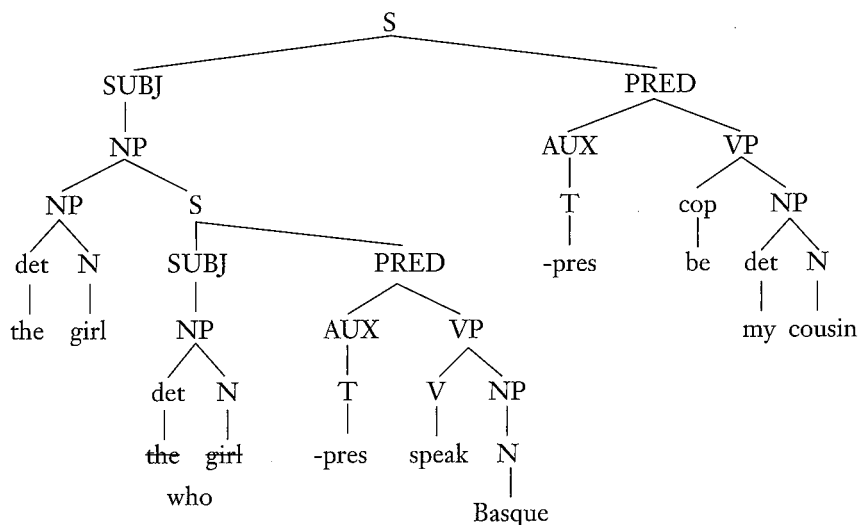
We understand that the “who” refers to “the girl.” We understand this as speakers of English, despite the fact that *who* can refer to persons of either sex in the singular or plural:

The boy who speaks Basque is my cousin.

The girls who speak Basque are my cousins.

Who is the relative pronoun in all these sentences. We know that it has the same referent as the head NP that directly precedes it. To account for sentences that are embedded within NPs, we have to expand our phrase structure rule for the NP to include:

NP → NP S



In order to function as a relative clause, the embedded clause must contain an NP that is identical in reference to the NP in the main clause. In this case, the subject will be the relative pronoun *who*.

In addition to the relative pronoun *who*, *that* is often used as the subject of a relative clause:

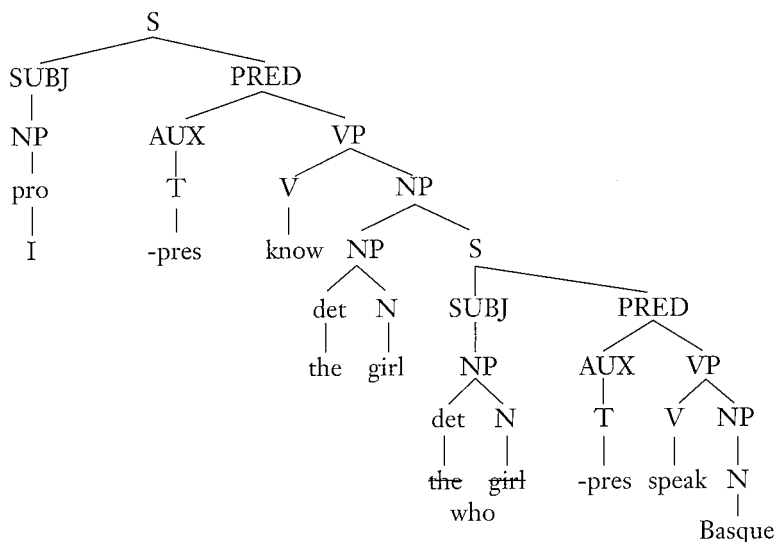
The flowers that are in the vase need some water.

Here, *that* replaces *the flowers*.

Object-Subject Relatives

The sentence that we have just examined has an embedded sentence that modifies the subject NP of the main clause. An embedded sentence with a relativized subject can also modify an NP that is the object of the main clause; for example:

I know the girl who speaks Basque.



For this type of relative clause, the relative pronoun *that* can also serve as the subject:

I arranged the flowers that are in the vase.

Object-subject relative clauses are quite common, as we will discuss later.

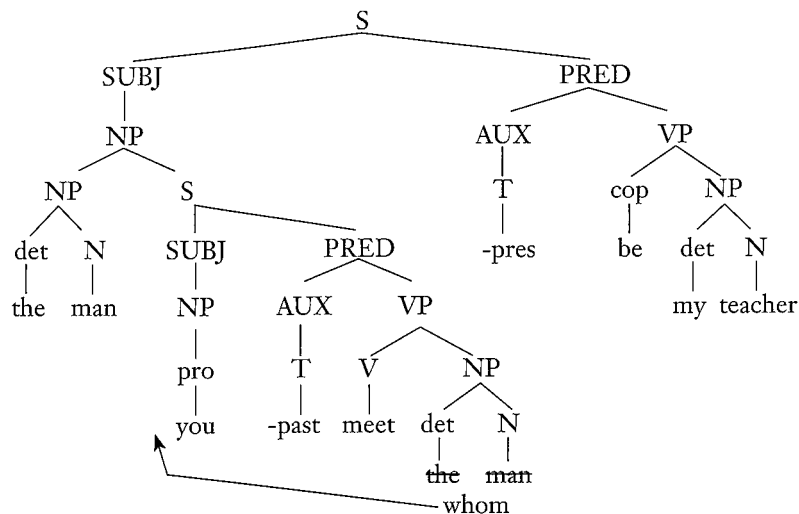
THE RELATIVIZATION OF THE OBJECT IN THE EMBEDDED SENTENCE

Subject-Object Relatives

In this type of relative clause, the object NP of the embedded sentence is relativized. Consider the following:

The man whom you met is my teacher.

What is the embedded sentence in this example? At first glance, the relative clause in this sentence appears no different from the first two types we looked at. Upon closer examination, however, we realize that the underlying embedded sentence is "you met the man" and that, therefore, the object NP, replaced by *whom* in the embedded clause, will need to be moved to the front of that embedded clause. In other words, with embedded sentences in which it is the object NP that refers to the head noun, it won't do to merely replace the object NP with a relative pronoun. What is necessary at this point is to move the relative pronoun to initial position in the embedded clause.



Here is one more example of this type of embedded clause with the relative pronoun *that*:

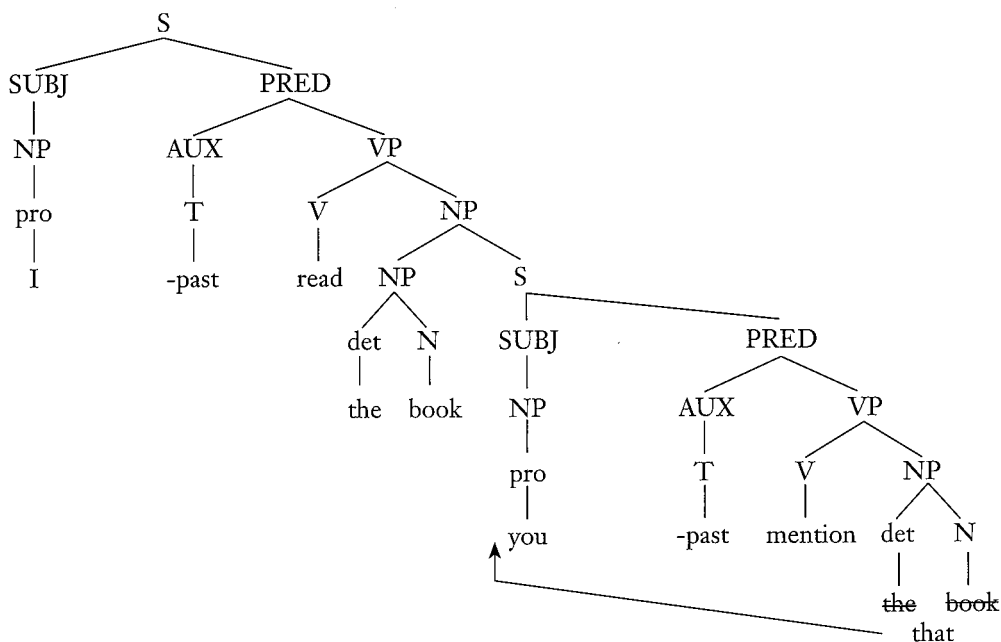
The report that you gave us was excellent.

In this example, the underlying embedded sentence is “you gave us the report.” Again, by moving the relative pronoun to initial position in the embedded clause, we get the correct order of constituents.

Object-Object Relatives

Earlier in this chapter, you saw that an embedded sentence with a relativized subject could modify the object as well as the subject of the main clause. This is also true of embedded sentences with relativized objects; for example:

I read the book that you mentioned.



Besides the need to move the relative pronoun to the front of the clause, another characteristic of embedded sentences with relativized objects is that the relative pronoun may be optionally deleted without affecting the grammaticality of the sentence:

I read the book you mentioned.

If we had deleted the relative pronoun, in the subject-object sentence, then we would have produced the following:

The man you met is my teacher.

We can only delete the relative pronouns that replace relativized objects; we cannot delete pronouns when they function as relativized subjects:

***The girl speaks Basque is my cousin.**

THE ORDER OF DIFFICULTY OF RELATIVE CLAUSES

So far, we have examined four basic types of relative clauses:

SS The subject of the embedded sentence refers to the subject of the main clause; for example:

The girl who speaks Basque is my cousin.

OS The subject of the embedded sentence refers to the object of the main clause; for example:

I know the girl who speaks Basque.

SO The object of the embedded sentence refers to the subject of the main clause; for example:

The man who(m) you met is my teacher.

OO The object of the embedded sentence refers to the object of the main clause; for example:

I read the book that you mentioned.

Studies in the field of second language acquisition have considered which types of relative clauses are easier (or conversely, more difficult) to acquire. Kuno (1974) hypothesized that OS and OO relative clause types would be easier to acquire than SS and SO types. He reasoned that when the embedded relative clauses interrupted the sentence by coming directly after the subject of the main clause,¹ they would be more difficult to process than those relative clauses that modified the object of the main sentence and thus came at the end of the sentence. Studies by Ioup and Kruse (1977) and Schumann (1980) seem to support Kuno's hypothesis.

Schumann, for example, examined the production data of seven ESL learners and observed the following order (the numbers represent the percentage of times the seven subjects used relative clauses of each type):

OS 0.53

OO 0.35

SS 0.06

SO 0.04

(0.02 of the clauses could not be unambiguously assigned to any one of the four types.)

In a subsequent study of the English written production of 170 Cantonese speakers, Wong (1991) found an order similar to that of Schuman: OS 47 percent, OO 26 percent, SS 15 percent, SO 10 percent (2 percent unidentifiable).

Stauble (1978) examined the frequency of these four relative clause types in samples of native speaker discourse drawn from three different discourse types: informal speech, spontaneous writing, and published writing. By calculating the number of instances and the frequency percentages for the four types of clauses, she obtained the following totals for the three combined discourse types:²

| | <i>Instances</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|-------|------------------|--|
| OS | 234 | 55 |
| OO | 108 | 25 |
| SS | 52 | 12 |
| SO | 30 | 7 |
| Total | 424 | 99 (does not equal 100 because percentages were rounded off) |

There is an obvious correlation between the rank order and frequency of occurrence of the different types of relative clauses used by native speakers and the observed second language production order. In support of this observation, Reali and Christiansen (2007) report that the processing of relative clauses is made easier by their frequency of occurrence.

Other recent studies have examined the relationship between frequency of occurrence and ease of processing more closely by considering other elements within relative clause types. For example, reading tasks conducted by Reali and Christiansen (2007) revealed that when personal pronouns are subjects within object relative clauses (OS), the processing of the relative clause is facilitated.

The need for additional funding was emphasized

Of course, increased frequency is likely not only due to the fact that such relative clauses are easier to process, but also because what is positioned at the end of a sentence is more likely to require elaboration, an information-structuring principle we have encountered several times already in this book. This is an explanation for why the object of a sentence is more likely to be modified by a relative clause than the subject.

ESL/EFL teachers, of course, may eventually have to deal with the teaching of all four types of relative clauses. However, since the OS and OO types are much more frequent, they clearly deserve priority.

THE DIVERSITY OF RELATIVE CLAUSE TYPES

So far, we have dealt only with relative clauses modifying the subjects and objects of main clauses. Such a perspective belies the complexity that actually exists. The chart on page 614 illustrates the diversity of English relative clause structures.

The Relativization of the Object of the Preposition in the Embedded Sentence

One of the relative clause types shown in the chart that we have yet to examine is the one in which the object of the preposition in the embedded sentence is relativized. If we analyze one such example sentence from the chart, such as

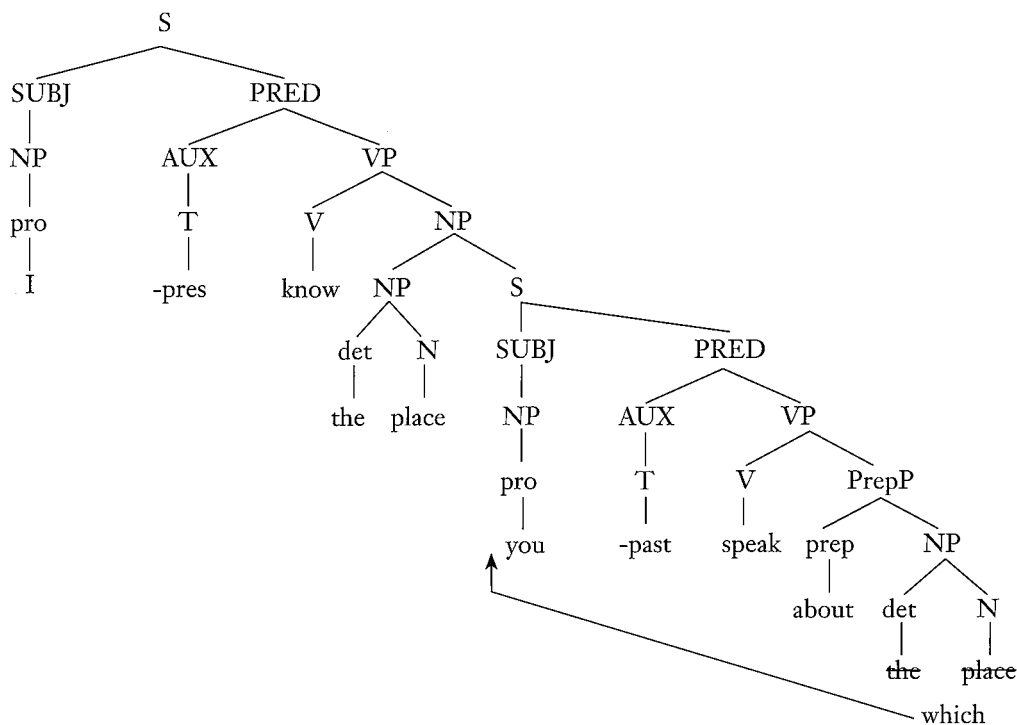
I know the place which you spoke about.

we see that its basic structure is:

EXAMPLE SENTENCES FOR THE VARIOUS RELATIVE CLAUSE STRUCTURES IN ENGLISH*

| Function of head noun in main clauses | Function of relativized noun in relative clauses | | | Object of a preposition |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| | Subject | Direct object | Indirect object | |
| Subject | The girl <i>who</i> speaks Basque is my cousin. | The man <i>who(m)</i> you met is my teacher. | The man <i>that</i> I gave the book to is over there. | The place <i>which</i> you spoke about is Denver. |
| Direct object | I know the girl <i>who</i> speaks Basque. | I know the place <i>that</i> you mentioned. | I gave the man <i>that</i> you mentioned the book. | I know the place <i>which</i> you spoke about. |
| Indirect object | We gave the boy <i>who</i> broke the window a warning. | I sent the boy <i>that</i> Mary saw a letter. | I told the boy <i>that</i> you gave the book to a story. | I gave the boy <i>that</i> you were talking about the book. |
| Object of the preposition | I talked with the girl <i>who</i> speaks Basque. | I work for the man <i>that</i> you met. | Mary knows about the boy <i>that</i> I gave the book to. | I know of the place <i>which</i> John spoke about. |
| Predicate noun | Mr. Thomas is a teacher <i>who</i> prepares his lessons. | Latin is the subject <i>that</i> Mr. Thomas teaches. | He's the boy <i>that</i> I gave the present to. | Denver is a place <i>which</i> you'll want to go to. |

*Note that in addition to these structures, the possessive determiner *whose* can relativize any noun functioning as a subject, direct object, indirect object, object of a preposition, or predicate noun, giving us in effect 40 distinct relative clause structures in English.



Another possibility, however, involves fronting the preposition along with its relativized object. If we were to do this, we would get:

I know the place about which you spoke.

This construction, with the fronting of the preposition and the relative pronoun, is a rather formal one. It is rarely used in informal spoken discourse; however, it is fairly common in more formal spoken English, such as speeches or news programs on television, and in written English in various registers as illustrated by the following examples taken from COCA:

She is charged with a crime about which her memory is a complete blank.
 (NBC Dateline, 2012 12057)

There is also variability in the age at which children acquire linguistic structures.
 (Eisenberg, S., *Language Speech & Hearing Services in Schools*, 43.1, 2012)

I remember an old person to whom I was speaking 20 or 30 years ago...
 (Talk of the Nation, 2012 12032)

The social network has become the means by which many online users communicate, get news and find entertainment. (Cass, S. *Technology Review*, March/April 2012)

In this more formal version in which the preposition is fronted, we cannot use *that* to replace the relativized object of the preposition:

***The person with that you were talking is the principal.**

***The chair on that you were sitting broke.**

In other words, *who(m)* and *which* are the only acceptable relative pronouns with fronted prepositions.

The relative pronoun *that* can be used, however, if the preposition is not fronted along with the relative pronoun:

The person that you were talking with is the principal.

The chair that you were sitting on broke.

Finally, we have already learned that the relative pronoun that replaces an object can be deleted (e.g., *I read the book you mentioned*). This is also possible for relative pronouns that substitute for objects of prepositions. Keep in mind, however, that the relative pronoun can be deleted only if the preposition has not been fronted along with the relativized object NP:

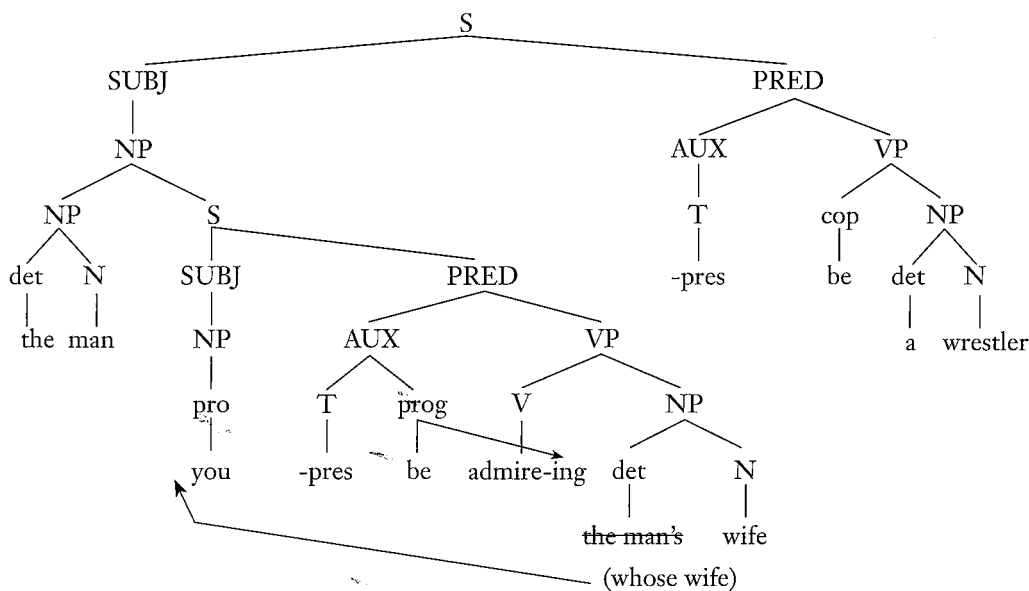
| | |
|---|--|
| Preposition not fronted | Relative pronoun deletion possible |
| The place which you spoke about is Denver. | → The place [] you spoke about is Denver. |
| Preposition fronted | Relative pronoun deletion ungrammatical |
| The place about which you spoke is Denver. | → *The place about [] you spoke is Denver. |

Although relative pronoun deletion is possible when the preposition has not been fronted, Stauble (1978) found that in all three discourse types she sampled, retention of the relative pronoun was preferred over deletion. Where deletion was more frequent in Stauble's data, the head noun was almost always human. While Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) did not look specifically at relative pronouns with prepositions, their analysis of zero-relativizers (i.e., relative pronoun deletion) found that in all registers of spoken and written English, the majority of restrictive relative clauses retained the relative pronoun, especially in academic prose (90 percent of all restrictive relative clauses) (p. 620). Their analysis, however, does include relative clauses for which relative pronoun deletion would not be possible. Thus, further research is needed on the issue of deletion or retention of relative pronouns that substitute for objects of prepositions.

The Relativization of the Possessive Determiner in the Embedded Sentence

The relative clause type we will look at next is one not illustrated in the chart on page 614. It is an embedded construction that speakers use to express possession related to a noun in the main clause. The basic structure for a sentence of this type follows:

The man whose wife you are admiring is a wrestler.



As the example shows, a determiner marked for possession (*the man's*) in the embedded clause refers to a noun in the main clause (*the man*). The relative determiner *whose* substitutes for *the man's*. When the relative determiner *whose* is fronted, the noun it modifies (*wife*) must also be fronted (**the man whose you are admiring wife is a wrestler*).

The Meaning of Relative Pronouns

Recall from the introduction that restrictive relative clauses modify head nouns and are thus sometimes called *adjectival* or *limiting clauses* since they serve to restrict and identify the head noun to that subset of individuals that the speaker wishes to refer to. However, we have thus far been substituting relative pronouns for NPs without really being specific about the rules governing their use. Every relative pronoun is entered in the lexicon together with its semantic (and other) features. The feature specifications allow us to select the appropriate relative pronoun depending upon the features of the NP it replaces and the discourse context in which it will be used. The following are the relative pronouns in English and some of their salient semantic and syntactic features:

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| who + subject NP | which + subject/object NP |
| + human | – human |
| whom + object NP | that + subject/object NP |
| + human | ± human |
| | whose ± human |
| | + possessive |
| | + determiner |

Earlier in this chapter, we summarized some of the challenges for ESL/EFL learners in producing English relative clauses as they concerned three dimensions: the position of relative clauses, markers other than relative pronouns, and the presence or absence of pronominal reflexes. Another important difference across languages concerns whether or not relative pronouns distinguish the feature *+human* or *–human* of head noun NPs for which they substitute. Descriptions of relative clause constructions for a number of languages in *Learner English* (Swan & Smith, 2001) note that there is no equivalent of English *who* used to replace NPs with the semantic feature *+human*. Dutch, German, French, Russian, Polish, and Scandinavian languages are among those that do not have a relative pronoun used only for this purpose. This difference may result in EFL/ESL students using *which* in English to replace NPs that are *+human*. Some ESL/EFL learners may use the *who/which* distinction to mark features related to their native languages that are not present in English. Papaefthymiou-Lytra (2001) notes that Greek learners of English may use *who* in relative clauses to replace NPs that in Greek are masculine or feminine, while using *which* to replace NPs that are neuter in Greek; thus, for example, a native speaker of Greek may modify an inanimate noun in English with a relative clause using the relative pronoun *who* (p. 140). Similarly, Smith (2001) points out that Arabic has three relative pronouns equivalent to *which*, *who*, and *that*, which are used to distinguish the grammatical gender of NPs in Arabic rather than human or non-human features (p. 206).

The Use of Relative Pronouns and Relative Clauses

We will begin our discussion of use with an overview of the distributions of relative pronouns in the registers identified in Biber et al. (1999), focusing on those that tend to be most relevant to ESL/EFL learners, at least for language production: conversation,

news, and academic prose. We will also give attention to several relative pronoun pairs and groups that are often the focus in ESL/EFL instruction, especially at more advanced levels: the *who/whom* distinction, the use of *that/who* or *which* in restrictive relative clauses, and the use of *whose/of which*. Following this discussion of relative pronouns, we will turn to uses of relative clauses in conversation and in writing.

RELATIVE PRONOUN USE

It should be no surprise that the relative pronouns *who*, *which*, and *that* were found by Biber et al. (1999) to be the most frequent relativizers in restrictive relative clauses in their corpus of spoken and written American English. *That* in particular was quite common in all registers; as we have mentioned before, this relative pronoun, unlike *who* and *which*, is not restricted in relation to the $+/-$ *human* feature of the NP for which it substitutes. However, while *that* was by far the most frequent relative pronoun in conversation, both *who* and *which* were more common relativizers in news. And *which* was by far the most frequently used relativizer in academic prose. Biber et al. note that animate (typically $+human$) references are not very common in academic prose, thus resulting in less frequent occurrences of *who* and accounting for the high frequency of *which* (p. 610).

Of course, another reason for the high frequencies of relative pronouns *that* and *which* is that they can substitute for NPs in a range of syntactic positions (subjects, direct objects, and objects of prepositions) unlike, for example, object pronoun *whom* or possessive determiner *whose*.

Who/Whom in Object Positions. The use of *whom* typically arises in instruction related to writing for advanced ESL/EFL learners as well as native speakers. Although it would always be prescriptively correct to use *whom* to replace a relativized human NP in object position as a direct object or as the object of a preposition without a fronted preposition, native speakers do not generally use it this way in spoken English. Often they opt for the simpler subject case form, *who*, instead:

I spoke with the student *who(m)* I loaned the book to.

If, however, *who(m)* is replacing the object of a preposition and the preposition is fronted along with the relative pronoun, *whom* will occur much more frequently:

I know the student to $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{whom} \\ \text{?who} \end{array} \right\}$ you loaned the book.

Although *whom* is quite rare in English conversation, it is used in more formal spoken contexts such as in this example from COCA:

The companion *whom* she met online is behind bars. (CNN_Velez 2011, 110815)

Regardless of register, *whom* is most frequently used as the object of a preposition and not as a direct object. In the COCA spoken corpus (mostly TV news programs), for example, *whom* with prepositions accounts for over two-thirds of the total uses of *whom* (5037). Across all registers, the most frequently occurring prepositions occurring with *whom* are *of* and *with*; *of whom* alone accounts for between 24 percent and 30 percent of tokens (including direct objects as well as objects of prepositions) across spoken and written registers; *with whom* represents 12 percent of all *whom* tokens in COCA's spoken corpus and a similar percentage (14 percent) in the written categories of news, magazines, and academic prose. Further, the lexical bundles consisting of quantifier + *of whom* (e.g., *all/many/some of whom*) are quite common across all registers; such partitive constructions (see Chapter 17) account for approximately half of the *of whom* uses in COCA's spoken corpus. These frequencies

and patterns for the use of *whom* suggest that for ESL/EFL instruction at advanced levels, teachers may want to put more focus on the use of *whom* as a prepositional object rather than as a direct object, particularly with commonly occurring prepositions such as *of*, *with*, *for*, *by*, and *to*, as well as to provide instruction and practice with high-frequency lexical bundles such as *many of whom* and *some of whom*, especially for academic writing.

That/Who or Which. As mentioned earlier, Biber et al. (1999) found *that* to be by far the most frequently used relative pronoun in conversational English, where it is often preferred over either *which* or *who(m)*.

In written discourse, *who(m)* is usually preferred over *that* for human antecedents; *which* and *that* are used to indicate a nonhuman head noun.³ However, sometimes *that* is used for human antecedents in written registers, as in these examples from COCA's academic prose corpus:

A teacher that is interactive with students, who cares and is enthusiastic impacts students' enjoyment of physical education. [Smith, M & St. Pierre, P., 2009, *Physical Educator*, 66(4), 209–221]

He'd be a man who could prance when he walked, a man that could really fool and surprise you. [Atkins, J., 2012, *Journal of American Culture*, 35(2), 166–180]

Note, however, that in both these examples, *who* is also used for the same referent as *that*.

The frequent occurrence of *that* with indefinite pronouns (e.g., *everybody* and *something*) as a head NP is discussed by Biber et al. (1999) as a pattern observed in academic and news registers, as well as conversation (p. 617). The following examples from COCA's academic prose corpus illustrate, both the dispreferred (less common) and preferred patterns:

Dispreferred: **But chronic pain is something which nobody really wants to know about.**
(*Community Care*, 2010, 1822, 28–29)

Preferred: **... students often view energy as something that enables organisms to carry out a function, with objects either needing or having energy.**
[Hartley, L. 2012, *BioScience*, 62(5), 488–496]

Whose/Of Which. *Whose* historically refers to a human head noun, including collective nouns whose members are human, such as clubs, government agencies, or businesses. As we mentioned earlier, however, corpus analysis of academic prose reveals that *whose* is often used to indicate genitive relationships with inanimate, even abstract, nouns, as Biber et al. (1999, p. 617) have pointed out. The following text examples from COCA's corpus of academic journals exemplify this use:

It does not include ecosystem services whose economic value ... may nonetheless provide critically important benefits.[Turner, W., Brandon, K., Brooks, T., Gascon, C., Gibbs, H., Lawrence, K., Mittermeier, R., & Selig, E., 2012, *BioScience*, 62(1), 85–92]

This plain ceramic jar ... contains residue of a white cosmetic whose complex formula is evidence for an extensive knowledge of chemistry among the city's ancient inhabitants.
[Lawler, A., 2011, *Archaeology*, 64(6), 24–31]

As for *of which*, Biber et al. (1999) note that this alternative form for possessive relationships is, in general, less common than *whose*, but again academic prose stands in contrast to other registers, with *of which* occurring almost as frequently as *whose* (p. 618), as in this example from COCA:

Renovating the structure will be a slow and difficult project, the cost and duration of which remain unclear. [Rose, G. 2012, *Foreign Affairs*, 91(1), 3–6]

In summary, the teaching of these relative pronouns in ESL/EFL classrooms will need to distinguish their uses across different registers, keeping in mind that some of them, such as *whom* and *of which*, are in fact very rarely used in informal conversation.

THE USE OF RELATIVE CLAUSES

Recent studies of relative clause usage have been concerned with both their frequency distribution across different genres and with semantic and discourse factors that may account for different patterns of usage, especially as these patterns include the optional deletion of relativized objects.

An overview of relative clause frequency is provided by Biber et al. (1999), supporting the general impression that relative clauses are much more frequent in written registers than in conversational English. Their analysis also indicates that for all registers, relative pronoun deletion (what they refer to as “zero-relativizer”) is somewhat common in all registers, though it occurs most frequently in conversation (p. 610).

Use of Relative Clauses in Conversation

Some of the most interesting and detailed research to date on the use of relative clauses in spoken English has been conducted by Fox and Thompson (1990; 2007), who have explored how the linguistic choices that speakers make in order to manage information flow in interactional contexts affect the patterns of relative clauses used. The following sections summarize the communicative functions related to specific patterns that Fox and Thompson identified.

Grounding. As explained by Fox and Thompson (1990), *grounding* refers to the way in which speakers make a newly introduced NP relevant for their listeners; that is, how they relate it to a referent already known to their interlocutors (p. 300). So for example, a personal pronoun (*I, she, we*) representing a person or persons known to the listeners often provides this relevance or grounding for a newly introduced NP:⁴

[The car] that she borrowed had a low tire. (SO)

One of the striking patterns that Fox and Thompson (1990) found, illustrated in this example, is that when nonhuman head nouns functioned as subjects (e.g., *car*), the relative clauses modifying them typically had relativized objects (e.g., *that* substituting for *car*) with a context-relevant pronoun (e.g. *she*) serving as the subject of the relative clause. Through the speaker’s use of a pronoun representing someone known to listeners in order to mark the head noun’s relevance to the discourse, the entire relative clause (e.g., *that she borrowed*) serves to ground, or anchor, a head noun that has not until this time been established in the discourse. Here is another example from their data, with the object relative pronoun deleted and the relative clause subject personal pronoun *you* referring to the interlocutor:

[The only thing] you’ll see is the table. (SO)

Characterizing. A second pattern that Fox and Thompson (1990) identified was that in which nonhuman head NPs functioned as objects of the main clause, with relativized subjects in the modifying relative clause: an OS type, as in these examples from their data:

O S

They’re selling [these candies] that explode when you chew on them.

O S

I don’t like [the pants] that come down narrow and then bell out.

The relative clauses in this pattern had a strong tendency to characterize or describe the head NP rather than functioning to anchor or ground it, as we saw in the SO pattern. The object noun heads (e.g., *these candies*, *the pants*) tend to be definite and already grounded in the discourse, so the relative clauses simply provide descriptive information about them.

Giving New Information. Another pattern of relative clause use in Fox and Thompson's (1990) data involved sentences with "existential" head nouns (i.e., logical subjects) following nonreferential *there* subjects (see Chapter 23):

logical subject

There were [two people] *there who were constantly on stage.*

logical subject

In the U.S. there are [over a hundred thousand people] who are over a hundred years old.

As in these examples, the logical subject head nouns tend overwhelmingly to have indefinite determiners (e.g., *two*, *over a hundred thousand*) but are specific in reference as well as being human. Furthermore, they strongly favor relativized subjects (*who* in these examples) over relativized objects. In these two cases, the italicized locatives *there* and *in the U.S.* ground the head nouns in the discourse.⁵ With this grounding, the relative clauses move the discourse ahead—that is, they provide new information that contributes to the development of the discourse.

Use and Non-Use of Relative Pronouns for Object Relative Clauses

In a more recent study, Fox and Thompson (2007) again closely examined features of relative clauses in conversational data, but this time, they turned their attention to the discourse factors that influence speakers' choices in the use or non-use of relative pronouns for object relative clauses. In other words, they looked at what factors might account for the choice to use a relative pronoun when it is optional or, as commonly occurs in conversational English, to use a zero-relativizer. The following examples from their data illustrate this variation:

Relativizer: **I have [one] *that you can use.***

Zero-relativizer: **There was [something] *we needed.***

Analyzing 195 relative clauses for which they determined a relativizer was optional, they identified seven variables that they found strongly correlated with the presence or absence of a relative pronoun. We present here five variables that seem most relevant for pedagogical purposes, with all examples from their data.

1. Emptiness of the Head NP

Empty Head NPs were defined as "those which are not lexically specific and/or which index generic groups or sets of individuals or objects" such as *time*, *thing*, *way* and *all* (p. 297). Empty Head NPs tend to be followed by zero-relativizers, as in this example:

Is there [any way] *he could like, meet us in Great Falls or something?*

2. Complexity of Main Clauses

Fox and Thompson found that complex main clauses favored a relativizer, while less complex clauses correlate with a zero-relativizer. They measured complexity of main clauses in two ways. First, they determined the number of words in the Head NP; longer Head NPs tended to be followed by a clause with a relativizer:

[this pair of suede pants] *that I got.*

A measure of less complex main clauses was the presence of a copular verb. Zero-relativizers were typically used with Head NPs in copular clauses, such as a predicate nominal, as in this example:

that's just [a bed] *they move around.*

3. Unique Head NPs

These NPs, including superlatives and those with the modifiers *only* and *first*, without exception, took zero-relativizers in Fox and Thompson's (2007) data. An example is the following:

that's [the first compliment] I've got in a long time.

4. Length of the object relative clause

As with the length of the Head NP discussed in (2), the length of the relative clause affected the use of the relativizer, with longer and more complex clauses, such as the following, favoring relativizers:

[all the stuff] that Vicki's told me that she pulls.

5. Personal pronouns as subject of object clauses

When the subject of an object relative clause is a personal pronoun, the object relativizer is typically omitted:

I have [two cats] I'd like to turn in to the Humane Society.

Fox and Thompson (2007) note that this finding supports those in Biber et al. (1999) for all registers, but that they found this correlation to be most frequent in their conversational data when the personal pronoun subject is *I*, as in the previous example.

While we would not advocate that these findings be presented as a set of rules for ESL/EFL students in developing conversational skills, instructional contexts may arise in which students have questions about conversational forms they see in written texts, such as newspapers, magazines, and fiction, that include conversation or other spoken dialogue with zero-relativizers. And, as we will discuss further, the question of what factors account for variation in the use of use or non-use of relativizers is relevant to written discourse as well.

One final point that Fox and Thompson (2007) make is that speakers tend to use zero-relativizers in contexts in which the main clause and the relative clause are most closely integrated with each other. They consider these constructions to approach what they call a "monoclausal" status; that is, the utterances with these clauses are more like a single clause than two clauses (e.g., *It's the stuff I like.*). They note that these constructions are similar to Jespersen's (1933) description of "contact clauses" that have no connecting words between them. We can expect that ESL/EFL students may not be consciously aware of many relative clause constructions they encounter in spoken English that are different in their forms and functions from those in written discourse.

Use of Relative Clauses in Writing

Biber et al.'s (1999) large-scale corpus analyses of written and spoken English confirms what past studies have indicated in terms of the higher frequencies of relative clauses in written registers. Restrictive relative clauses are more frequently used in fiction, news, and academic prose than in conversation. And even zero-relativizers are more frequent per million words in all written registers.

Discourse motivations for the choice between a zero-relativizer and a relative pronoun have been explored in written discourse, as well as in conversation. Temperley (2003), examining relative clauses in the Penn Treebank corpus of articles from *The Wall Street Journal*, considered lexical and syntactic factors that influenced whether or not an object relative pronoun was used. He identified two primary factors influencing the use of the optional object relative pronoun: (1) ambiguity avoidance; that is, the need for clarity of meaning in a construction that without the relative pronoun is potentially ambiguous; and (2) anaphoricity

of the relative clause subject; i.e., whether or not the subject pronoun of the relative clause has been previously mentioned. Both motivations involved the nature of the relative clause subject used. Temperley points out that relative subjects that are plural or mass nouns without determiners can, if adjacent to the head NP modified, be misinterpreted as part of the head noun as in this example:

The car companies { **declared bankruptcy.**
 { **like to lease is a Ford Taurus.** (relative clause)

Temperley notes that ambiguity would be much less likely in the case of relative clause subjects with modifying adjectives (e.g., *large companies*) instead of nouns (*car companies*). Just as Fox and Thompson (2007) found in their conversational data, if the relative clause subject is a pronoun (e.g., *they*) with anaphoric reference to previous discourse, the writer tends to choose a zero-relativizer for the object pronoun. In summary, Temperley proposes that the desire to avoid ambiguity can account for writers' use of object relative pronouns in cases where anaphoricity of the relative clause subject is not an issue.

Other recent research on the use of relative clauses in written texts has revealed the important functions they serve in specific academic genres. Tse and Hyland (2010), in a study concerned with relative clause use in academic journal article descriptions across disciplines, found that these constructions typically restricted or defined the scope of nouns that related to four topics: the format of acceptable contributions to the journals (e.g., [*studies that contribute to the fundamental understanding of fluid phenomena*]); the research themes (e.g., [*studies on [species] which are more primitive*]); the journal itself (e.g., [*an international journal that publishes research...*]) and the audience (e.g., [*readers*] ... *who are interested in qualitative, discourse analytical approaches*). Over half of the uses across all disciplines involved describing the formats of studies that journals accepted. However, the disciplines varied as to the frequency with which NPs were modified by relative clauses for the other three topics. For example, engineering journals used a much higher proportion of relative clauses specifying the journal's research themes than its audience, while sociology journals more often used relative clauses to describe the readership than research themes. In discussing their findings, Tse and Hyland emphasize the value of looking at the functions of relative clauses in both research and teaching.

While relative clauses are certainly an important grammatical construction to focus on in the teaching of writing, it should be noted that instruction in their use needs to be contextualized and treated as part of a modification system that includes other, simpler forms. Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1994) found that relative clauses and participles are not nearly as frequent as prepositional phrases used as adjective modifiers after nouns in three genres: editorials, fiction, and letters. Thus, they recommend that teachers familiarize learners with the range of constructions writers use for similar purposes and with the patterns that are found in particular registers or genres. Some of these patterns will be taken up in more detail in the next chapter.

RELATIVE CLAUSE VARIATION IN WORLD ENGLISHES

Finally, we should note that in recent decades, increasing attention has been given to patterns of relative clauses in countries where English is widely spoken, such as Hong Kong and Singapore. Gisborne (2000) summarizes a number of studies that have explored Hong Kong English patterns not present in Standard American or British English. Such patterns can help to explain what may be regarded as errors in Standard English when used by EFL

students. For example, Newbrook (1998) claims that the use of “zero” subject relatives such as “This is the student did it” is so typical that Hong Kong students are often unaware that it is nonstandard (p. 47). Another pattern identified by Newbrook in Hong Kong English is also one seen frequently as a type of relative clause error in Standard American and British English, a construction in which a subject relative pronoun is used with only a participle for the main verb; i.e., the auxiliary has been omitted (p. 47):

This is the student who admitted last year.

According to Newbrook, this variation is a reduced relative clause with a redundant relative pronoun. Also looking at Hong Kong English, Yip and Matthews (1995, as cited in Gisborne, 2000; Yip and Matthews, 2007) have proposed that some relative clause variations that differ from those in Standard English, such as the use of resumptive pronouns (e.g., *When we see a new chair at home that we never see it before...*), may be motivated by speakers’ attempts to make more difficult constructions such as OO easier for listeners to process.

These and other studies remind us that it is helpful for teachers to know that learners’ grammatical “errors” may reflect a variety of English that differs in patterned and often systematic ways from Standard English forms and to realize that these patterned variations reflected a local variety rather than cross-linguistic influence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we explored the syntactic diversity of restrictive relative clauses in English. Without considering the use of *whose* as a relative determiner, there are at least 20 different structural types of restrictive relative clause, as exemplified in the chart on page 614:

| | |
|----|------------|
| OO | (12 types) |
| OS | (4 types) |
| SO | (3 types) |
| SS | (1 type) |

If we add the relativized determiner *whose* to these, there are at least 40 different types. Learners clearly face formidable challenges of form when trying to master relative clauses: where to place the relative clause in relation to the head noun, which relative pronoun to choose, the internal structure of relative clauses, and so on. However, the studies on use that we have reported here strongly suggest that instead of trying to teach all possible patterns for relative clauses, we would do well to discover which patterns our learners are most likely to need for their own oral or written discourse in English. Carrying out a relevant corpus-based study of relative clauses that would reveal syntactic, lexical, and discourse-functional patterns, such as those that Fox and Thompson (1990; 2007) found for conversation and Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1994) and Tse and Hyland (2010) found for written discourse, would be a useful way for ESL/EFL teachers to decide what to teach about relative clauses and when and how to present the information. Teachers or students can also consult the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) to search for discipline-specific use of relative clauses. Usage tendencies seem to be linked very specifically to given discourse genres, topics, and also to modality (speech versus writing). Much more research is needed along the lines of the studies reported here if we are to establish better informed pedagogical priorities in this area.

Finally, we can learn from cross-linguistic studies of relative clauses how their uses may differ. For example, a study by Yan (1985) using parallel written texts in Chinese and English on the same topic and of the same length reveals that Chinese uses one-third fewer relative clauses. The difference is particularly significant in view of the fact that Chinese exhibits a structural diversity similar to English in its inventory of relative clause types. Usage differences across languages make it all the more imperative that ESL/EFL teachers present relative clauses to learners in rich and clearly defined discourse contexts, rather than simply at the sentence level.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** Ordinarily we don't recommend introducing tree diagrams; however, for this particular construction, it has proved helpful for our ESL/EFL students to be able to see how relative clauses are formed in English. You may not wish to draw trees, but introducing the concept of an embedded sentence and showing how relative pronouns replace an NP in the embedded sentence seems to be a useful first step for many ESL/EFL students. For instance, give students handouts with sentences in brackets embedded within a main clause; for example:

The students [the students arrived late] missed the announcement.

Show them how the *who* is substituted for the coreferential NP. Have them do exercises of a similar nature on their own.

2. **Form.** Begin oral production using fairly tightly controlled contexts and perhaps only concentrating on one relative pronoun at a time. For instance, use a class information sheet to practice producing relative clauses with *who*. The students can make sentences to identify one of their fellow students who has some unique attribute; for example:

The student who comes from Romania is _____.

The student who speaks French is _____.

The student who studies economics is _____.

A variation of this activity is for the teacher to create a worksheet with questions about members of the class (e.g., *Who is the student who speaks French?*). Students then circulate around the room finding one or more classmates who match the descriptions.

3. **Form/Meaning.** In activities for beginning and low intermediate learners that involve responding to commands as a technique for developing interactional proficiency, teachers can ask students to complete tasks using *that*-clauses to describe concrete items (Cuisenaire rods, classroom objects, or other realia), such as the following:

Pheng, give Misha the green rod that is beside the yellow one.

Darya, put the notebook that has a blue cover on my desk.

4. **Form.** To develop proficiency in using the various forms of relative clauses, students will need practice in noticing how the different types are constructed. To provide contextualized practice, give students a passage to read (authentic or adapted) with examples of different types of relative clauses. Have students work in small groups or pairs to identify all the relative clauses. Ask the groups or pairs to put brackets around each relative clause and draw a line under the relative pronoun, as in this example:

What are some of the qualities that make people happy? According to recent research, people [who are happy] design their lives to bring joy into it. For example, they might try

to include an activity [that they really like], such as spending time with friends, into their daily schedule. Expressing positive emotions is another trait [that happy people have] and one [that may even increase longevity]. In one study, nuns [whose autobiographies expressed positive emotions such as gratitude and optimism] lived seven to 10-and-a-half years longer than other nuns. (Adapted from “Five Things Happy People Do” by Gabrielle LeBlanc: <http://reggio1234.wordpress.com/2010/02/28/5-things-happy-people-do-by-gabrielle-leblanc/>)

To begin with, practice should focus only on relative clauses with explicit relative pronouns (that is, not those with zero-relativizers or other reduced forms).

5. **Form/Meaning.** Have students play a game in which they try to identify the name of a person or thing you or another student is thinking of. You may wish to use a “Twenty Questions” format, with the modification that questions must contain a restrictive relative clause. Students ask questions such as:

Is this person someone who once was president of the United States?

Is this thing something (that) I would use in the kitchen?

6. **Form/Meaning.** Have students work in small groups to create and conduct polls with their classmates, asking them to complete statements about things they like related to one or more topics of interest. They can use the following or a similar template statement to complete: *I like X who... /I like X that...* For example:

I like teachers who...

I like movies that...

Responses could be elicited by having groups exchange their sentence completion tasks with another group, or, if one topic, passing around a sheet of paper on which each student could write a response. The completed responses can be returned to the groups, who report on the results.

7. **Form/Meaning.** Thewlis (2007) suggests an activity for relative clause production of various types in which groups of students discuss “the ideal life partner.” Each group would prepare a list of 5–10 statements based on their discussion. Thewlis gives the following as examples: *The ideal partner is someone who takes an equal responsibility for raising the children. The ideal partner is someone whom I can always trust* (p. 215).

Groups could then present some of their statements to the class, commenting on which met with most agreement or, conversely, were most controversial.

8. **Form.** Advanced level students often find challenging the production (and sometimes the comprehension) of relative clauses with prepositions in formal academic prose, constructions in which the relative pronoun is fronted along with a preposition such as *in/at/for which*. Such sentences often express time or place relationships in academic English and are frequently found in definitions of processes, concepts, or mechanisms.

To give students practice in writing sentences with this form of relative clause, find examples from concordancers such as COCA, try typing them into a search engine like Google (e.g., *at which, to whom, for which*) to find text examples, or simply make up your own examples from definitions. Then break the complex sentence into two sentences that students will need to combine. The following is an example:

Original sentence: Photosynthesis is a process in which sunlight is used to manufacture carbohydrates from water and carbon dioxide.

Sentences given to students:

a) Photosynthesis is a process.

b) In this process, sunlight is used to manufacture carbohydrates from water and carbon dioxide.

Explain that when we want to combine the two sentences for better flow and conciseness, we can “borrow” the preposition from the second sentence. Instruct students to identify the repeated noun (in this case, *process*) and then place the preposition after that noun in the first sentence following it with *which* and complete the sentence.

Here is another example:

a) The turbine has two parts.

b) The generator is connected to the turbine.

Original sentence: *The turbine to which the generator is connected has two parts.*

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. *Provide an original sentence that illustrates each of the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples.*

a. restrictive relative clause

d. relative pronoun substitution

b. relativized object of a preposition

e. relative pronoun deletion

c. relativized subject

f. relativized possessive determiner

2. *Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences:*

a. The boy who spoke with John is my brother.

d. Ann wrote the story you like.

b. The boat that he is building is large.

e. The family with whom I am staying lives in town.

c. I know the student whose article was published.

3. *Why are the following sentences ungrammatical?*

a. *The river who is wide is the Mississippi.

b. *The woman with that you were working quit.

c. *I thought about the man whose we heard story.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

4. *If your students produce the following, what will you tell them to make them aware of the correct forms of relative clauses?*

a. *The woman whom is walking towards us is my aunt.

b. *The boy who John hit him is on the ground.

c. *The student sits next to me is sick.

d. *That she is wrapping the package is for the holiday.

e. *I like people they are friendly.

5. An ESL/EFL student asks you to explain the difference between the following two sentences:
- The person that called to you was a stranger.
 - The person that you called to was a stranger.

How would you answer?

6. Assume the following excerpt had appeared as part of an editorial in a small town newspaper:

... a week earlier, this state's education commissioner, Bob Smith, reported that the state's fourth- and eighth-graders cannot write well. . . . "It's a rare student that writes really well with a sense of personal expression, or what teachers call voice," Smith said. Grammar probably isn't a strong point, either, especially if students are taking their cue from Smith. The Commish, if he were speaking proper English, would have said, "It's a rare student who writes really well. . . ." The pronoun "that" refers to things; "who" refers to people.

Is the writer of this editorial correct in what he says about Smith's grammar?

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For other second language acquisition studies that examine the effect of native language background on the acquisition of relative clauses by ESL/EFL learners, see:

- Chiang, D. (1980). Predictors of relative clause production. In R. C. Scarcella & S. D. Krashen (Eds.), *Research in second language acquisition* (pp. 142–145). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
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For other studies investigating motivations for relative pronoun use, see:

- Guy, G., & Bayley, R. (1995). On the choice of relative pronouns in English. *American Speech*, 70(2), 148–161.

For more syntactically sophisticated analyses of relative clauses than the one we provide, see:

- Baker, C. L. (1995). *English syntax* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
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For information on relative clause formation for many different languages, consult:

- Keenan, E., & Comrie, B. (1979). Data on the noun phrase accessibility hierarchy. *Language*, 55(2), 333–351.

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For an article with pedagogical suggestions, see:

- Nakamori, T. (2002). Teaching relative clauses: How to handle a bitter lemon for Japanese learners and English teachers. *ELT* 7, 56(1), 29–40.

For texts with exercises designed to give ESL/EFL students practice in forming and using relative clauses, consult:

- Bland, S. K. (with Savage, A., & Mayer, P.). (2008). *Grammar sense: Advanced grammar and writing 4*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
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Endnotes

1. This is called *center embedding*.
2. The percentages that emerge depend to a large extent on the data one uses. Examining exclusively oral TV talk show data in English, Gustafson (1992) found more OO clauses and fewer SS and SO clauses than Stauble, but the overall rank order remained the same.
3. Very often, professional editors change all *which* restrictive relative pronouns referring to nonhuman antecedents to *that*. This serves to further distinguish restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses. This is in fact the pattern found by Loch (1992) when she analyzed relative pronouns occurring in the February 3, 1992 issue of *Newsweek*. There are other differences between these relative pronouns that we will call attention to in the next chapter.
4. We have used examples adapted from those given in Fox and Thompson (1990) to illustrate their generalizations.
5. Fox and Thompson also show cases where propositional linking or propositional coherence provides the grounding, but these examples are longer and more complex.

More on Relative Clauses: Nonrestrictive and Relative Adverb Clauses

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we described restrictive relative clauses. In this chapter, we introduce nonrestrictive relative clauses. Then we treat reductions that occur in both types of relative clauses—restrictive and nonrestrictive, which account for a variety of structures. Finally, we examine relative adverb clauses, which are additional relative constructions in English that are formed by means other than relativizing a noun phrase or a possessive determiner.

Like the constructions that we described in Chapter 28, these relative clause types have variants in structure that may pose challenges to English learners in their acquisition of both forms and uses in different registers (e.g., in conversation versus academic prose). For example, consider the underlined constructions in the following sentence pairs, which express much the same information. 1a contains a nonrestrictive relative clause, and 1b its reduced form. 2a contains a restrictive relative clause, and 2b a relative adverb clause:

1. a. We met the keynote speaker, who was an archeologist, during the reception
b. We met the keynote speaker, an archeologist, during the reception.
2. a. That was the place in which they discovered ancient artifacts.
b. That was where they discovered ancient artifacts.

In teaching ESL/EFL learners, you will want to help them explore what factors may account for the choices of speakers/writers when they have options such as the ones in these examples. And, special attention may need to be given to constructions that are either not used in students' first languages or are used differently. Swan (2001), for example, cites the restrictive/nonrestrictive distinction in English as a problem for native speakers of German. As Swan observes, these speakers, in beginning to learn English, may not understand what is ungrammatical about a sentence such as **Her mother, that lives in Paris, is visiting for a week.*

SUMMARY OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RESTRICTIVE AND NONRESTRICTIVE RELATIVE CLAUSES

| <i>Restrictive</i> | <i>Nonrestrictive</i> |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provides information needed to identify or limit a noun in the main clause. 2. Derived from an underlying embedded source. 3. No pauses or special punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off the relative clause from the main clause. 4. May not modify an entire proposition, only a head noun. 5. <i>That</i> is freely used as a relative pronoun (as well as <i>wh</i>-pronouns <i>who(m)</i>, <i>which</i>, etc.) 6. Does not usually modify proper nouns.² 7. May modify a head noun with a generic determiner like <i>any</i> or <i>every</i>. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provides additional information that is nonessential to determining the identity of a noun in the main clause. 2. Derived from two independent underlying sentences. 3. Commas (or parentheses or dashes) in writing and special pauses and lower pitch in speech set the relative clause off from the main clause. 4. May modify either a head noun or an entire proposition in the form of a comment. 5. <i>That</i> cannot be used as a relative pronoun. Only <i>wh</i>-pronouns are possible. 6. May modify proper nouns as well as common nouns.² 7. May not modify a head noun with a generic determiner like <i>any</i> or <i>every</i>. |

Later in this chapter, in the section entitled “Use of Nonrestrictive Relative Clauses,” we will look at other differences between these clauses in spoken and written English.

REDUCTION OF RESTRICTIVE AND NONRESTRICTIVE RELATIVE CLAUSES

In the last chapter, we saw that relative pronouns that replaced some sort of object in the relative clause could be deleted. For example,

The curry that I cooked was too hot.

allows deletion of the relativized object *that*:

The curry I cooked was too hot.

We also noted that relative pronouns replacing the subject of the embedded relative clause could not be deleted:

The ice skater who is in the show looks familiar.

***The ice skater is in the show looks familiar.**

While the relativized subject pronoun, such as *who* in this example, cannot be deleted by itself, deletion is possible if the subject is followed by a *be* verb.³

The ice skater in the show looks familiar.

In the sections that follow, we will look at several different types of reduced relative clauses involving constructions that are noun phrase (NP) postmodifiers:

- Prepositional phrases
- Appositives
- Present or passive participle phrases
- Complex postnominal adjective phrases

To conclude our discussion, we will point out one type of *-ing* participle used as an adjectival postmodifier that is not derived from a relative clause.

Prepositional Phrases

As we have just seen, a prepositional phrase modifying a head noun can occur from the reduction of a relative clause:

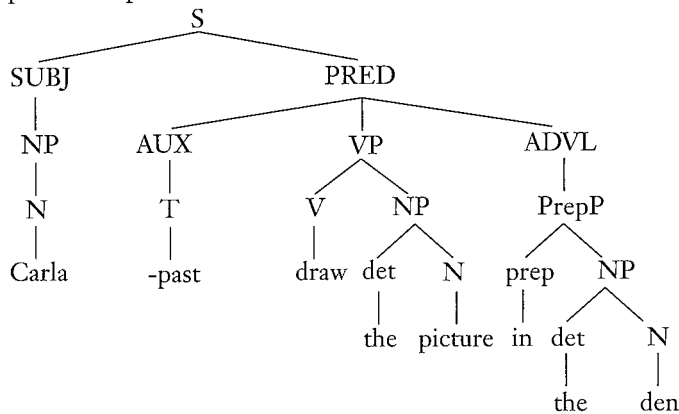
The ice skater *in the show* looks familiar.

However, not all postnominal prepositional phrases are related to reduced relative clauses; recall that in Chapter 5, we have an independent means of generating postnominal prepositional phrases to account for such expressions as these: *the city of New York*, *a man of means*, *a lady of leisure*, and so on.

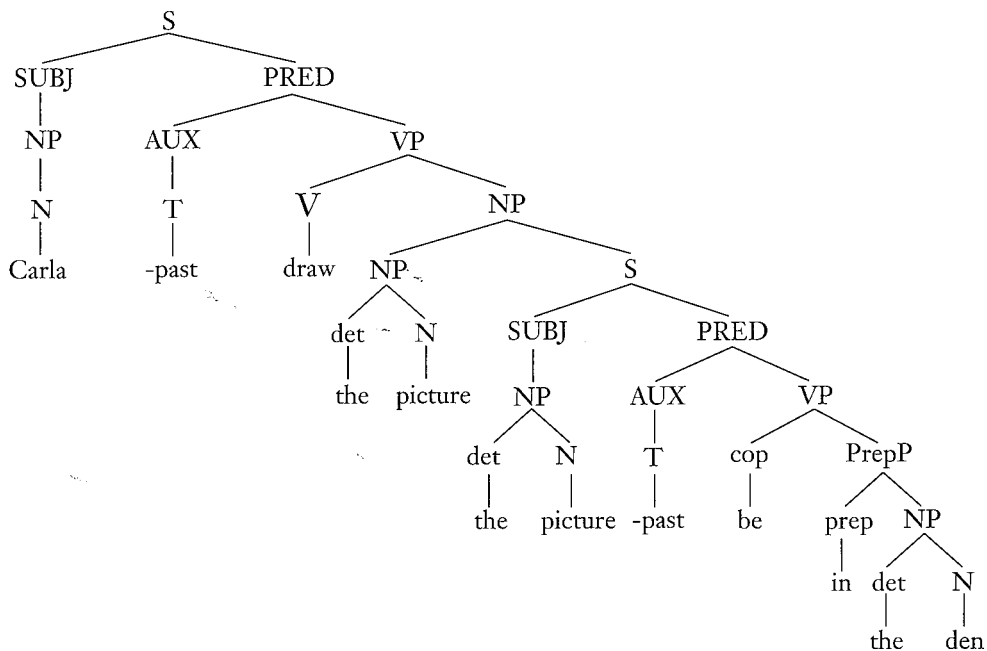
Then, too, prepositional phrase may sometimes be ambiguous as to whether it is a reduced relative clause or an adverbial prepositional phrase. For example, consider this sentence:

Carla drew the picture in the den.

We may interpret the prepositional phrase *in the den* as telling us where Carla drew the picture, in which case the prepositional phrase would be adverbial and the tree would look like this:



Alternatively, we may interpret the prepositional phrase as telling us which picture it was that Carla drew (i.e., the one in the den, as opposed to the one in the dining room). This latter interpretation requires a structure of a different sort, one where the prepositional phrase is adjectival, originating in a restrictive relative clause which is subsequently reduced when the subject relative pronoun *that* and the *be* verb are deleted:



Because of the potential ambiguity of prepositional phrases such as this, writers may opt to use a full relative clause rather than a prepositional phrase when the intended meaning is adjectival and not adverbial.

Appositives

Relative pronoun + *be* deletion can also operate on some of the nonrestrictive relative clauses that contain a noun phrase with the same referent as an NP in the main clause:

Mr. Chun, who is our new neighbor, comes from Taiwan.

→ **Mr. Chun, our new neighbor, comes from Taiwan.**

Lansing, which is the capital of Michigan, has a population of 115,000.

→ **Lansing, the capital of Michigan, has a population of 115,000.**

In these examples, *our new neighbor* refers to *Mr. Chun* and *the capital of Michigan* refers to *Lansing*, allowing deletion as shown. The resulting phrase is what traditional grammarians refer to as an *appositive*—that is, a word or phrase following an expression that gives further information about that expression.

Present or Passive Participle Phrases

Deleting relative pronoun + *be* may also produce constructions with participle phrases. When a restrictive relative clause contains a relativized subject and a verb in the progressive aspect, deletion of the relative pronoun and *be* will result in a present participle phrase modifying the head noun:

Full relative clause

How old is that boy who is riding the surfboard near the pier?

Present participle phrase

How old is the boy riding the surfboard near the pier?

Another participle construction results when the relativized subject + *be* is deleted from a relative clause in the passive voice:

Full relative clause

The surfer who was tossed by the huge wave won the competition last year.

Passive participle phrase

The surfer tossed by the huge wave won the competition last year.

Complex Postnominal Adjective Phrases

The final type of sentence in which relative pronoun + *be* deletion can occur is when a relativized subject and *be* copula are followed by a complex adjective phrase, such as an adjective + prepositional phrase, as in this example:

Full relative clause

The editorial that was favorable to the project appeared yesterday.

Complex adjective phrase

The editorial favorable to the project appeared yesterday.

Participles That Do Not Derive From Relative Clauses

It should be noted that there are also adjectival *-ing* participles that could not possibly be accounted for via relative pronoun + *be* deletion. Recall that verbs which are stative rather

than dynamic (e.g., *be*, *know*, *hear*, *measure*, etc.) rarely take progressive aspect, yet stative verbs can and do occur as adjectival participles:

Max built an additional room measuring 12 by 12 feet.

This *-ing* participle cannot be derived from a reduced relative clause:

***Max built an additional room, which is measuring 12 by 12 feet.**

How to account for the structure of such adjectival participles remains an unsolved problem in need of further research.

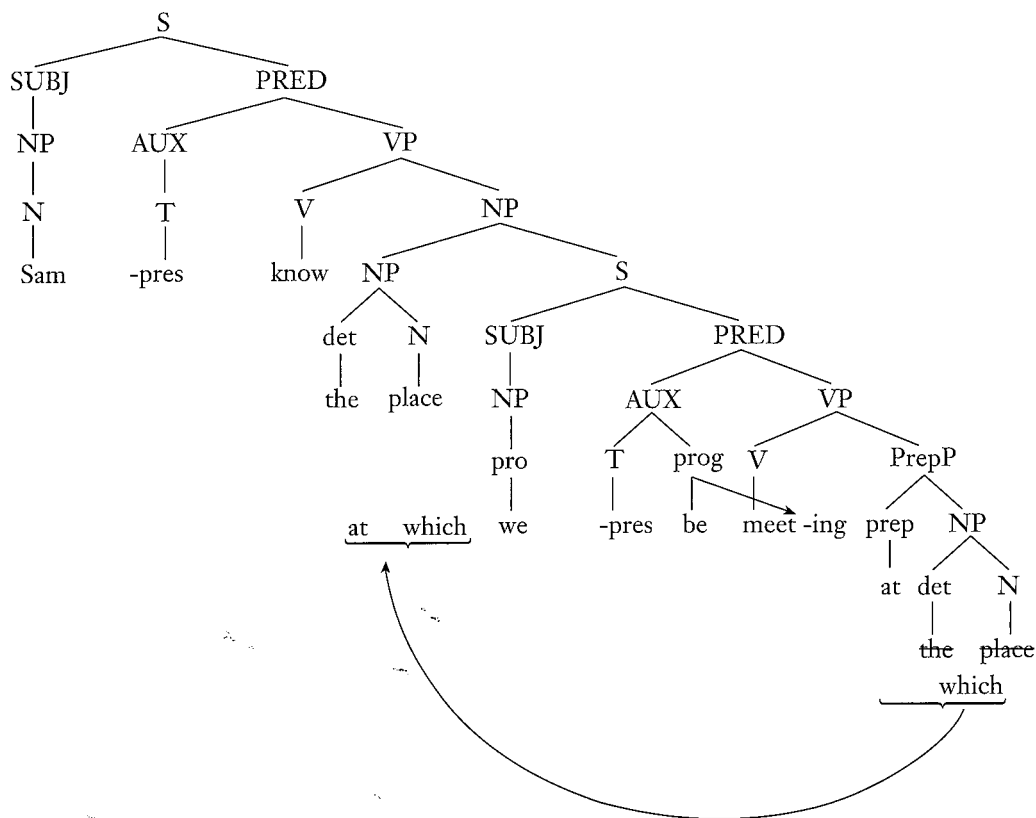
The Form of Relative Adverb Clauses

Another relative construction that we have yet to discuss is the relative clause that begins with a relative adverb. Consider the following:

Sam knows the place where we're meeting and the time when we're meeting, but he doesn't know the reason why we're meeting.

We claim that each of the underlined clauses here are related to and therefore analyzable in a manner similar to restrictive relative clauses of the sort that we have already analyzed in the preceding chapter. Let us examine the tree for one of these clauses.

Sam knows the place where we are meeting.



At this point, we produce:

Sam knows the place at which we are meeting.

However, another possibility also exists. We could produce a less formal variant of this sentence by substituting the relative adverb *where* for the locative prepositional phrase *at which*:

Sam knows the place where we are meeting.

Here is the semantically related relative adverb for the corresponding preposition and relative pronoun combination:

prep + which [+ place] → where

prep + which [+ time] → when

prep + which [+ reason] → why

There is also one other combination that we will examine shortly:

prep + which [+ manner/way] → how

The other two clauses in our original sentence are produced in the same way. They are less formal variants of clauses in which the preposition and the relative pronoun are retained:

Sam knows the time at which we are meeting →

Sam knows the time when we're meeting.

Sam doesn't know the reason for which we are meeting →

Sam doesn't know the reason why we're meeting.

HEAD NOUN DELETION

You may have noticed that although it is perfectly grammatical to say *the place where* in *Sam knows the place where we are meeting*, it does seem redundant. A less redundant and less formal variant of such a statement is:

Sam knows where we are meeting.

Here, we delete the head noun where the use of both the head noun and the relative adverb is redundant. Such a structure is often called a *free relative* since it allows a relative adverb clause to exist without a head noun in the surface structure. It could apply to our other example sentences as well:

Sam knows the time when we are meeting. → Sam knows when we are meeting.

Sam doesn't know the reason why we are meeting. → Sam doesn't know why we are meeting.

Although deletion of the head noun is optional in all three of these instances, it becomes obligatory if the relative adverb is *how*:

***That is the way how he writes.**

By deleting the head noun, this sentence becomes grammatical:

That is how he writes.

It is interesting to note that the sequence “the way how” was acceptable in earlier forms of Standard English and still is acceptable in some dialects—but not in Present-day Standard English. ESL/EFL students predictably have trouble with this exception.

Of course, while we say that head noun deletion is optional except for the relative adverb *how*, the head noun cannot be deleted without a concomitant loss of information in those cases where it is more specific than the general nouns *the place*, *the time*, *the reason*, *the way/manner*.

Here are a few examples from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) (Davies, 2008), in which the head noun contains more specific information:

It was the time of day when the temple was closed to the general public ... (*Heat of the Night* by Silvia Day, 2008)

I had never seen coffee until I went to the village where I'm a resident now and met with second and third-generation coffee farmers. (*Ebony*, June 2005).

In such cases, deleting the head noun would result in a sentence that is less precise semantically.

RELATIVE ADVERB DELETION

Another way to make sentences of “the way how” type acceptable is to delete the relative adverb:

That is the way he writes.

Relative adverbs *where*, *when*, and *why* can also be deleted after the head noun as in these examples:

... the place I lived longest in my life was Hanoi. (COCA, *Christian Science Monitor*, 2008)

The first time you mention or you quote from one of the authors that you read for this essay for this paper that you're writing, footnote that person. Okay? (Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English, Simpson, Briggs, Ovens & Swales, 2002) (MICASE, Transcript SEM300MU100)

... students said right out the reason I want to speak Spanish is because I want to be considered Latino. (MICASE, Transcript STP355MG011)

It is not clear, however, what the exact conditions on relative adverb deletion are. For instance, the relative adverb *where* cannot always be easily deleted for all speakers of English:

?Jersey City is the place I was born.

If the preposition is retained, grammaticality is restored:

Jersey City is the place I was born in.

Or, if the head noun is deleted but the relative adverb retained, the sentence is also grammatical:

Jersey City is where I was born.

Further study is needed to determine precisely when it is appropriate to delete the relative adverb as opposed to deleting the head noun. In fact, we mention this topic again along with some related issues of use at the end of this chapter.

Nonrestrictive Use of Relative Adverb Clauses

While the majority of relative adverb clauses occur in restrictive relative clauses, the relative adverb clauses with *where* and *when* are also found in nonrestrictive clauses, as illustrated in these examples from COCA:

Most emissions originate from fires set in tropical rain forests and savannas, where they cause recurrent episodes of severe pollution that affect some of the poorest regions of the world. (*Environmental Health Perspectives*, May 2012)

The percentage of working adults is at its lowest level since 1983, when women were still entering the workforce. (*Mechanical Engineering*, April 2012)

Although the nonrestrictive clauses above both occur at the end of sentences, such clauses can also occur sentence medially:

Back in 2000, when the USDA was developing the National Organic Program standards, the first draft did not prohibit genetically modified foods. (*Futurist*, May/June 2012)

FREE RELATIVE CLAUSES VIA SPECIAL SUBSTITUTION

In our previous discussion of head noun deletion, we indicated that a head noun can be deleted when it is semantically redundant with the relative adverb (e.g., deleting *time* before *when* or deleting *place* before *where*). Head noun deletion can also occur in the absence of an adverb clause when the head noun functions as a subject, object, or predicate noun:

The new teacher is just the (person/one) who we're looking for. →

The new teacher is just who we're looking for.

Here are some corpus examples from MICASE:

A lot of the ... offenders we're now admitting ... are not maybe as dangerous as ... who we're letting out [of prison]. (Transcript SEM340JG072)

How do we understand the connection between who we think we are and ... the institutions that we attempt to build. (Transcript COL999MX036)

We cannot, however, delete a head noun from certain combinations of head nouns and relative pronouns. For example, the predicate head nouns in both of the following sentences from COCA need to be retained:

It was something that I couldn't change. It was just the person that I was. (*NPR Talk of the Nation*, 2011 [110205])

Another possibility is to substitute the free relative pronoun *what* for *the thing that/which* when the head noun is nonhuman.

Painting is the thing (that/which) he does best. → **Painting is what he does best.**

The examples so far have shown predicate head nouns followed by relative pronouns. Here are additional examples showing free relatives in subject positions:

Who you are usually determines how you're doing and where your interests lie. (*Natural History*, July/Aug 2003)

What she does is a lot harder than what I do. (20/20, 2011 [110118])

Through increasingly accessible corpus data, ESL/EFL teachers can find appropriate examples to help learners become familiar with the forms and uses of these constructions in a variety of spoken and written contexts.

Use of Relative Clauses

RELATIVE PRONOUN + BE DELETION

Earlier in this chapter, we indicated that relative pronoun + *be* deletion is optional. By now, you understand that when we use the term *optional*, we mean that the sentence is grammatical with or without the application of the particular operation. However, we do not mean that the operation is arbitrary. Presumably, there are discourse constraints limiting the application to appropriate contexts. To date, much of the research on functional differences between full relative clauses and their reduced forms involving relative pronoun + *be* deletion has looked at the frequency and use of these constructions in scientific and technical writing, especially in academic journals. Huckin and Olsen (1983) state that, in general, choosing between a full clause and a reduced form depends on how much emphasis a writer wants to give the information expressed in a relative clause, with a full clause demanding more attention.

Other researchers have more closely examined the pragmatic goal of emphasis and attention in text analyses. VandeKopple (1998) identified distinct differences in the ways that

relative clauses were used to modify concepts in physics research reports in the 20th century, as compared to ones written in the late 19th century. While he cautioned that his findings could not be generalized to all science writing, let alone writing in general, VandeKopple found striking differences in usage patterns in the 262 relative clauses he examined. For example, the earlier 19th century articles used full relative clauses in describing instruments and procedures as in this example from his data (p. 180):

At the back of the prism a small pocket was constructed, one side of which was formed by the wall of the prism itself. (Nichols, 1895)

In contrast, the articles published in the late 20th century often condensed such descriptions to postmodifying phrases such as participle or prepositional phrases:

...a Perkin-Elmer PS-18 photoelectron spectrometer modified for digital counting and high temperature studies. (Rosenberg, Lee, & Shirley, 1980, p. 133)

VandeKopple (1998) explains this difference in forms for similar functions by pointing out that the 19th century researchers needed to use full forms with verb tenses to describe how new instruments were created, unlike in the later studies, in which the instruments were known information to readers and could be generalized for many applications. He notes that more recent articles often used full relative clauses to make use of modal verbs in these clauses for commenting on processes that did or did not occur, as in this example he gave:

We note the absence of a peak corresponding to the transition, which should appear at 19.08 eV. (Rosenberg et al., 1980, p. 136)

Master (2002) explored motivations for relative pronoun + *be* deletion in 18 technical articles in nine science disciplines; for comparison, he also analyzed several articles in *TESOL Quarterly*. Of 832 relative clauses that could undergo relative pronoun + *be* deletion, most of them restrictive clauses, almost two thirds were reduced. To account for the use of reduced forms versus full relative clauses, Master considered the syntactic environment of each clause and also asked expert technical writers to account for use of full forms rather than the optional reductions. Although his data included relative clauses that allow only relative pronoun deletion (i.e., object relative pronouns), the great majority, 91 percent, were of the type allowing deletion of *be*. His analysis found clauses tended more often to be reduced when they were embedded in other subordinate forms, such as complement clauses (see Chapter 31) or adverb clauses.

Eliciting feedback from two expert technical writers on 55 full relative clauses that could have been reduced, Master (2002) identified several additional constraints on clause reduction. One important reason he gave was that the writer wanted to emphasize the uniqueness or particularity of a head noun. As an example, Master offers the unacceptable reduction to a participle phrase in the sentence *The scientist *discovering DNA* was Frederick Meischer (rather than the full clause *who discovered DNA*) since *the scientist* refers to a particular person. He compares this to the acceptable reduction in this generalization: The rings *surrounding Saturn* contain small particles of ice, in which the participle phrase *surrounding Saturn* refers to all of the planet's rings, not one in particular (p. 218).

Another reason technical writers gave for not reducing relative clauses was to achieve parallelism, for clarity, with another full relative clause (Master, 2002, p. 219):

These decisions have been based on studies that were sometimes poorly controlled and that often gave conflicting results. (Hansotia & Broste, 1991)

One other possible reason for not reducing relative clauses involved the need to highlight new information for readers, often presented at the end of the sentence (p. 221):

The temperature of 1 degree C was selected because it is the temperature threshold that is used for predicting the development of winter wheat. (Howard & Dixon, 1990)

Close analyses of relative clause types in written texts, such as those analyzed by VandeKopple (1998) and Master (2002), can provide a better understanding of how writers make choices between full relative clauses and reduced forms and identify what discourse constraints may either prevent or discourage reductions to prepositional, participle, or other phrases. Instructors can help advanced level ESL/EFL academic writers consider motivations for these variations in research reports in their field and to check their own writing in progress for appropriate usage.

Head Noun Repetition with Restrictive Relative Clauses

A variation of restrictive relative clause structures found in both spoken and written English is one in which the speaker or writer repeats the head noun following a pause or comma and then continues with a restrictive relative clause. The following are examples from COCA:

It was an entirely different love, a love that was true and sincere, and that she was discovering on her own! (CBS 48 Hours, 2003)

For percussionist Donald Knaack, this is also the sound of joy, a joy which anyone, from novice to virtuoso, can experience. (CBS Sunday Morning, 1998)

He was living a story, a story which didn't need to be rewritten ... (Chicago Review, Winter 1997)

As the examples here illustrate, this pattern tends to follow a head noun that functions in the main clause as either a predicate noun or direct object. The repetition of the head noun with an indefinite article as a stylistic device serves to *set off* the description or elaboration that follows.

USE OF NONRESTRICTIVE RELATIVE CLAUSES

Nonrestrictive Relative Clauses in Spoken English

Analyzing non-restrictive *which*-clauses in British and American spoken English, Tao and McCarthy (2001) discuss some of the problems identifying these clauses in interactional data. For example, they observe that, unlike commas in written English, which distinguish nonrestrictive clauses from restrictive ones, the pause in spoken English is not an absolute marker of nonrestrictive clauses. Further supporting the observations of both Taglicht (1977) and Fox and Thompson (1990) about the ambiguity of relative clause types in spoken English, Tao and McCarthy found that some of the *which*-clauses they examined might be interpreted either as a restrictive clause modifying a head noun or a nonrestrictive clause referring to an entire event described in the main clause. The following is one of the examples they offer as a “borderline” case (Tao & McCarthy, 2001, p. 657):

[Participants talking about whether the U.S. government has the right to restrain its citizens with regard to special countries they could not travel to]

That changed again, a few years later they passed some laws, or something like that, which did enable the government to to do ... um, ... visa res-restrictions.

In discussing this example, the authors state that the *which*-clause could be interpreted as a restrictive clause modifying *some laws* or, alternatively, a nonrestrictive clause referring to the event of *passing some laws*. In the end, they suggest that for communicative purposes, it may not matter whether one can distinguish the clause as one of the two types.

Added to the difficulty of establishing the restrictive or nonrestrictive character of some *which*-clauses in their spoken data, Tao and McCarthy (2001) observe that, in contrast to written English, nonrestrictive *which*-clauses in spoken English often appear far from the head nouns, indeed sometimes a number of interactional turns from the noun referent. In one of their

examples, the distance between the head noun phrase and the occurrence of the modifying *which*-clause was eight speaker turns, and there were a number of intervening clauses.

Despite the challenges of identifying nonrestrictive *which*-clauses in spoken English, Tao and McCarthy (2001) were able to analyze the functions of 692 of these clauses, revealing that the great majority (87.4 percent) were syntactically of the continuative type (that is, added after the main clause and functioning like additional sentences), in contrast to appositive *which*-clauses, which are embedded in the main clause and cannot be extraposed. The following are examples from their data (p. 654):

Continuative: **Hi, we were just passing and we just noticed you were open which is nice** (Br.)

Appositive: **...right now we are looking at April fifteenth which is a Friday and ... April sixteenth as the uh date for the public presentation** (Am.)

In addition to establishing continuatives as the preferred form of nonrestrictive *which*-clauses in their corpora of spoken English, Tao and McCarthy found that the majority of all nonrestrictive *which*-clauses (62 percent) served a single communicative function, which they term “evaluation.” The function of evaluation, along with another very frequent use, which they term “expansion,” account for almost all (93 percent) of the analyzed clauses in their data.

Nonrestrictive evaluation clauses were defined as “giving the speaker’s attitude, opinion, or stance towards the message of the immediately preceding utterance(s)” (Tao & McCarthy, 2001, p. 663). A British English example is the following:

[Speaker is complaining about the materialism that dominates Christmas]

(Speaker 1) **I know my brother goes into debt for the kids each Christmas you know like if they don’t spend two hundred pound on them you know it’s not enough**

(Speaker 2) **Mm which I think is silly but that’s the way of things today** (Br.)

The other frequent function of nonrestrictive *which*-clauses, expansion, “refers to the addition of information offered by the speaker as topically relevant, i.e., about the same person or object, or as a projection of the informational needs of the listener,” as in this example (p. 664):

[Speaker 2 is on the phone checking seat allocations with Speaker 1, an airline employee, for a forthcoming plane trip]

(Speaker 1) **What we’ve got is E and G, which is aisle and next to it**

(Speaker 2) **[Yeah]**

Tao and McCarthy comment that clauses within the broad category of expansion are not necessarily lacking some degree of evaluation but that they are not “overtly marked” as evaluative.

In summary, this large-scale study showed both a preferred syntactic type (continuative) and a preferred function (evaluation) for nonrestrictive *which*-clauses in spoken English. This information could be especially helpful for ESL/EFL learners in understanding their use in English conversation contexts. Many ESL grammar books, with attention to written English forms, put greater focus on appositive clauses embedded in main clauses, typically shown in opposition to restrictive clauses in the same position but without punctuation.

Nonrestrictive Relative Clauses in Writing: Genres and Disciplines

It is in written registers that researchers and language teachers have given most attention to the use of nonrestrictive relative clauses. From a range of corpus studies, it is clear that these relative clauses are much less frequent than restrictive clauses. Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999, p. 603) found some variation across the written registers, noting that nonrestrictive relative clauses account for approximately 30 percent of all relative clauses in news, but only 15 percent of all relative clauses in fiction and academic

prose. Several corpus-based studies of written texts in science and technology found higher frequencies of nonrestrictive clauses than identified in Biber et al.'s more general academic corpus. In Master's (2002) study of research articles across 10 disciplines, discussed earlier in this chapter, about 23 percent of all relative clauses, including reduced forms, were nonrestrictive. Likewise, Frodesen (1986) found that full nonrestrictive clauses accounted for 23 percent of all full relative clauses in a corpus of written Chemical Engineering texts.

A study of nonrestrictive clauses in writing that included academic and news genres as well as office memos was conducted by Eyring (1988). Interestingly, the rank frequency ordering of nonrestrictive relative clause types in Eyring's data matched that in Stauble's (1978) study of restrictive clauses in spoken and written data, which is discussed in Chapter 28. Eyring found one additional type: the commentary relative clause (e.g., *John didn't come, which was unfortunate*).

**A COMPARISON OF FREQUENCY OF RESTRICTIVE AND NONRESTRICTIVE
RELATIVE CLAUSE TYPES**

| Frequency of RRCs (informal speech, spontaneous writing, and published writing) (Stauble, 1978) | | | Frequency of NRRCs (office memos, popular magazines, and journals) (Eyring, 1988) | | |
|---|-----------|----------|---|-----------|----------|
| Type | Instances | Percent* | Type | Instances | Percent* |
| OS | 234 | 55 | OS | 189 | 57 |
| OO | 108 | 25 | OO | 59 | 18 |
| SS | 52 | 12 | SS | 33 | 10 |
| SO | 30 | 7 | SO | 8 | 2 |
| | | | Clause + comment on clause (cf. Tao and McCarthy's "evaluation") | 41 | 12 |
| Total | 424 | 99 | Total | 330 | 99 |

*Percentages do not add up to 100 percent because the numbers have been rounded off.

Furthermore, Eyring found that the prototypical nonrestrictive relative clause in her database had a head noun that was an identifiable inanimate common noun occurring in object position, followed by the relative pronoun *which* functioning as subject of the nonrestrictive relative clause (p. 33):

Very high-level languages . . . allow people to . . . leave the details to the machine, which must then search its database of domain-specific knowledge to complete the task.

Eyring's findings thus argue against the traditional presentation of nonrestrictive relative clauses as being prototypically center-embedded SS appositive constructions (e.g., *The computer, which had become obsolete, was recycled*). Although such appositive constructions do occur, the most frequent and typical nonrestrictive relative clause (and restrictive relative clause as well) is the OS type, where the relative clause functions to add new information or a comment to what has already been written or said about the head noun or the main clause.

Also interesting are some of the relative clause tokens in Eyring's (1988) most informal data: the interoffice memos. A few of these were similar to the intermediate cases that Taglicht (1977) had found in oral data, ones that fall somewhere between a prototypical restrictive and a prototypical nonrestrictive relative clause (p. 8):

I have hit a couple of minor glitches, that are probably pilot error . . .

We note here the use of *that*, a relative pronoun generally considered not acceptable in standard written English for nonrestrictive relative clauses. We might expect these informal, somewhat oral types to appear in e-mail correspondence as well.

Nonrestrictive Relative Clauses in Writing: Discourse Functions

Loock (2007), noting that studies of nonrestrictive clauses have tended to focus on their syntactic distinctions, focuses instead on their discourse functions. In a written corpus including news, academic writing, and fiction, Loock identified three discursive functions of nonrestrictive relative clauses:

1. The Relevance Nonrestrictive Clause

The most common of the three types that Loock (2007) identified, relevance nonrestrictive clauses, are used to address the problem that writers often experience in not being certain what information may already be known to their readers. These clauses provide what might be new information for the uninformed reader, while at the same time signaling the content as possible background information for the informed reader. As Loock puts it, it provides “supplementary information in order to compensate for the discrepancies in the amount of knowledge shared by the participants” (p. 346). Here are a few examples, with *who*- and *which*-clauses, from his corpus:

It is hard to square his action with the Energy Policy and Conservation Act, which authorizes the president to tap the reserve.

When Steven Soderbergh, who has already directed Clooney in *Out of Sight*, phoned to tell me he was planning to remake the film, I jumped for joy.

Regarding the second of these examples, Loock comments that the nonrestrictive clause was actually added by an editor of *Metropolitan Eurostar Magazine* (a fact noted explicitly in a French version of the article), thus further supporting its status as additional information needed for at least some of the readers in order to understand more fully the information in the main clause.

2. The Subjectivity Nonrestrictive Clause

Loock (2007) defines the discourse function of the subjectivity nonrestrictive relative clause as one intended to express “an opinion, a judgment, or a comment from the speaker” (p. 353). The following is an example:

The men’s 4 × 100 m team, who might not have qualified anyway, went out in the heats when they bungled a change-over...

Loock points out that explicit markers of opinion or judgments, such as *I think* or *in my opinion* could be added to subjectivity nonrestrictive clauses. He adds that this type can also provide a correction of what has already been said, as in this example he presents from Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985, p.1246):

He imagined himself to be an artist, which he was not.

An observation that Loock makes regarding punctuation of nonrestrictive clauses in his data is that those separated from the main clause by dashes (6 percent of the corpus) or parentheses (3 percent) instead of commas are mainly the subjectivity type.

Loock (2007) also notes that the categories of relevance and subjectivity are not mutually exclusive, with some cases lying somewhere between the two.

3. The Continuative Nonrestrictive Clause⁴

The third, and least common, of the three types in Loock's (2007) corpus, continuative nonrestrictive clauses, serve to move events through narrative time, a function that he notes is typically restricted to independent clauses. Here is an example from his data (p. 340):

Robinson College asks candidates to complete a questionnaire on their education background, which is then used to help decide whether they are offered a place.

As in the example above, adverbs such as *then*, *now*, or *later* often appear in this type of clause as explicit markers of an event subsequent to the one in the main clause. Although the relative clause is syntactically subordinated to the main clause, the informational content in this type is at much the same level as the main clause, a fact that Loock (2007) states has previously been pointed out by Huddleston and Pullum (2002): "The continuative relative has equality of informational status, presenting a further event in a narrative chain" (p. 1064). As further support for the somewhat independent status of continuative clauses, Loock states that coordinators such as *and* can sometimes replace the relative pronoun (e.g., *and is then used to help decide whether they are offered a place*).

USE OF RELATIVE ADVERB CLAUSES

In considering the uses of relative adverb clauses, the following questions are relevant to language teaching: (1) What are their functions in discourse? (2) Which semantic types (i.e. place, time, reason, manner) are most frequent across spoken and written registers? (3) How do the structural variants of relative adverb clauses differ across registers?

Discourse Functions

The functions of relative adverbs have not, it seems, received the same research attention as relative pronouns have. Snow (1978) observed that relative adverbs often occur in sentences that refer to a previously mentioned idea. A look at examples of relative adverbs *when*, *where*, and *why* following generic head nouns such as *time*, *place*, and *reason* in COCA supports Snow's observation. In the following examples, the italicized demonstrative pronouns *this* and *that* and the personal pronoun *it* all refer to previously mentioned topics:

***This* represents the time when we all grew up.** (*Atlanta Constitution*, 2010 [100307])

I mean, *it* was just the time when nobody knew what was going to happen. (*NPR Talk of the Nation*, 2010 [100414])

***This* would seem to be the place where he would do well.** (*PBS NewsHour*, January 10, 2012 [120110])

Then the government stepped in and created the laws against these methods. *That* is the reason why all of our butchers are gone! (*Mother Earth News*, Apr/May 2012)

We also see this type of reference to a previous idea with the relative adverb *how* (which does not allow a head noun) and the head noun *the way* (which does not allow the relative adverb *how*) preceding a clause:

***This* is how the business works now.** (*American Primetime*, 2012)

Whether authorized or unauthorized a good biography is nuanced and complex, because *that* is the way most people are. (*American Scholar*, Winter 2011, 80.1)

In referring to previously mentioned ideas, relative adverbs may introduce additional information such as comparisons to other times, places, reasons, or ways of doing something:

***That* is very different from a place where people come up with new ideas, where students know how to think, not what to think.** (*Christian Science Monitor*, 2011 [1104426])

While our examination of numerous examples of relative adverbs in the COCA does not represent a formal analysis, it is worthwhile noting for teaching purposes that there is lexical patterning of relative adverb clauses with particular constructions, ones that may have specific discourse functions. These are patterns that an English speaker (or at least a language teacher!) might come up with in brainstorming examples of relative adverbs with generic head nouns. For example, the co-occurrence of *there's* with *a reason why* is common, and as you might expect, introduces the speaker or writer's reason and highlights or emphasizes it:

There's a reason why engagements exist: so that a couple can get to know one another in this heightened state of commitment. (*Redbook*, October 2011)

There's a reason why bond yields are so low. The economy is stuck in low gear, unemployment is 8.2% and the rest of the world isn't in better shape. (*Money*, 2012 [120623])

Another example would be the lexical bundle *that's the way we* + VP which sometimes functions as a summary statement:

That's the way we do things. (*Analog Science Fiction & Fact*, Jan/Feb 2012)

That's the way we look at it. (*Chicago Sun Times*, 2007 [20070313])

Introducing patterns of usage such as these can help ESL/EFL learners acquire common ways that relative adverbs are used in both speaking and writing.

Distribution of Semantic Types Across Registers

In the registers of conversation, fiction, news, and academic prose, Biber et al. (1999) found that *where* was by far the most frequent relative adverb in all registers, though it was less common in conversation than in the written registers. An analysis of the head nouns that preceded *where* revealed differences across registers: whereas the head nouns in conversation, fiction, and news usually referred to physical locations, in academic prose, head nouns preceding *where* frequently referred to “logical locations” (p. 625). Here are examples of the latter that we found in the COCA:

Figure 12 shows a case where artists chose to draw lines on locally weak ridge and valley features... (*Communications of the ACM*, January 2012, 55.1)

We have come to a point where our thinking has to change... (*Technology & Engineering Teacher*, 2012, 71.7)

Relative adverb clauses with the form [preposition + *which*] were also found to be common in academic prose but not so frequent in other registers; in particular, *in which* was as commonly used as *where* in academic prose, with *to which* the next most common. Of course, both *in which* and *to which* can refer to time as well as place, accounting to some degree for their high frequency. Also, as noted in Biber et al. (1999), in academic prose, a great variety of lexical items appear as head nouns preceding [preposition + *which*] (e.g., *a state, an apparatus, the context*) (p. 630).

STRUCTURAL VARIANTS ACROSS REGISTERS

Accounting for the uses of the structural variants across registers is a challenge for language researchers, considering that we have as many as six variants⁵ that could exist in a sentence in which a relative adverb may occur:

| Type | Example |
|---|---|
| 1. Relative pronoun fronted without preposition | 1980 was the year (which/that) I was born in. |
| 2. Relative pronoun deletion | 1980 was the year I was born in. |
| 3. Preposition is fronted with relative pronoun | 1980 was the year in which I was born. |
| 4. Relative adverb substitution | 1980 was the year when I was born. |
| 5. Head noun deletion | 1980 was when I was born. |
| 6. Relative adverb deletion | 1980 was the year I was born. |

In Snow (1978), a comparison of the last three of these types found that the full form exemplified in 4 (head noun + relative adverb) occurred most often in written or formal contexts. Biber et al. (1999) add to this observation that the generic head nouns *place*, *time*, and *reason*, in particular, are quite commonly followed by their corresponding relative adverbs *where*, *when*, and *why* (p. 626), a tendency that we have also noted in examining many examples from COCA.

Sentences with head noun deletion, such as in type 5 above, occurred most frequently in Snow's (1978) data in spoken and informal contexts. Here is an interview example illustrating this type from COCA:

That was where he had his best times. (NPR *Fresh Air*, 2006 [2006130])

Informal spoken English also seems to be the register in which the types shown in 1 and 2 most typically occurred in Biber et al.'s (1999) corpus, though not with high frequency. As for sentences with the head noun alone, as in 6, Snow found this to be the least frequent type in both written and spoken data for relative adverbs of time, place, and reason. However, when the relative adverb was *how*, there was a strong preference for use of the head noun alone (e.g., *the way*), as in the examples that we presented earlier in our discussion of lexical patterning.

SOME COMMENTS ON UNRESOLVED ISSUES

The line between use of a relative adverb and use of a regular relative pronoun is sometimes rather fuzzy. In certain environments either form seems possible without obvious differences in meaning. Also, we could delete either overt relativized element and still have a grammatical sentence:

Four in the afternoon is the time (when/that/∅) he always swims.

However, if we delete the head noun, only the relative adverb remains a grammatical option:

Four in the afternoon is (when/ *that/ *∅) he always swims.

When the head noun occurs as the object of a preposition, there seems to be a strong preference for *that*, or no pronoun at all, over the use of a relative adverb, which seems unacceptable here:

My father will have arrived by the time (*when/ that/∅) the train gets to town.

Why these preferences emerge is not completely clear. We do know that relative adverbs work best if they replace a [preposition + *which*] in the relative clause. This is why the following sentence is odd:

?The school where I attended is going to be demolished.

Here, the proposition underlying the relative clause is simply *I attended the school*, not *I attended at/in the school*; that is, there is no locative prepositional phrase with a relativized *which* as its object that *where* can replace. Therefore we have to say instead:

The school (that) I attended is going to be demolished.

The relativized object is, of course, optional in this sentence.

Finally, the fact that *the way that* but not *the way how* can occur in modern English

Can you show me the way (that/*how) this corkscrew works?

suggests that some relative adverb clauses that were previously only adverbial may be shifting to NP S adjectival-type relative clauses, so perhaps we should add a seventh pattern to the preceding six to allow for this possibility. It would be useful to have a unified treatment of these residual issues; for now, they remain topics for further research.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we further explored relative clauses to account for nonrestrictive as well as restrictive relative clauses. The formal differences between restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses reflect differences in meaning that are often unclear to learners. (We should note, however, that this distinction is often confusing for many English speakers as well.) Also, many learners have never before been introduced to the largely oral commentary-type nonrestrictive relative clause that modifies or makes a comment on the entire preceding main clause. A final challenge involves the use of commas in writing; many writers omit commas when the meaning is clearly nonrestrictive. Especially at the advanced levels, students may be familiar with many of the forms and meanings of these constructions but less so with their uses in real contexts.

We have shown that for both restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses the prototypical form in naturalistic data is OS. This is something that needs to be addressed in language pedagogy, where there has long been a traditional preference for presenting and teaching SS type relative clauses (both restrictive and nonrestrictive) over other more frequently occurring combinations of head nouns and relative pronouns.

Once the various possible patterns for relative adverb clauses have been made clear to learners, the variants discussed in this chapter present challenges primarily in use. When should one substitute a relative adverb for [preposition + *which*], and when should the head noun or the relative adverb be deleted? We admit that our own answers to these questions are not complete and that more research is needed. This also applies to deciding when one should retain the head noun and relative pronoun (*the person who/that; the thing which/that*) or substitute a free relative pronoun: *who* or *what*. We look forward to seeing further research that will elucidate the use of all the various types of relative clauses along the lines of the research on restrictive relative clauses by Fox and Thompson (1990) that we reported in the previous chapter.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Meaning.** One way of presenting the difference between restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses was suggested by W. Goodwin (personal communication). There are three steps in all:
 - a. The teacher says, “If you do not speak Japanese, stand up.” With the help of the other students and the teacher, one student writes a sentence on the board about the students who speak Japanese, such as:

The students who speak Japanese are seated.
 - b. The teacher then tells the class, “If you speak some English, remain seated.” One student, with the help of the others, writes the following on the board about the students who speak English:

The Japanese-speaking students, who also speak English, are seated.

- c. The teacher now asks the students to make an explicit comparison between the two sentences. After doing this, students in small groups create sentences using each type of relative clause to express information about the class or about class member(s).
2. **Form.** To practice reduced forms of relative clauses, bring lots of “action” pictures to class—pictures of people doing things like skiing, surfing, hiking, and swimming.
- a. First, elicit sentences with restrictive relative clauses reduced to prepositional phrases by asking students to make observations about where the people are performing the actions, using a prompt beginning with “I see...”:
- I see a woman in a swimming pool.
 - I see the climber on top of the mountain.
 - I see the man on the ski slope.
- b. Next, have the students pair up and practice producing statements using present participles about who (in the pictures) they would like to be and why, such as:
- I'd like to be the woman swimming in the pool because ...
 - I'd like to be the boy surfing in Hawaii because ...
 - I'd like to be one of those people hiking in the mountains because ...
3. **Form.** To practice reductions of nonrestrictive relative clauses, distribute small maps of the United States (or any country/region) or display a large map that everyone can see. Have students make statements containing appositives, such as:
- Rhode Island, the smallest state, is located in the Northeast.
 - Lake Superior, one of the Great Lakes, is the largest of the group.
 - Florida, the southeastern-most state, is a popular vacation spot.
4. **Form.** Ask students to work in pairs interviewing each other about their backgrounds, hobbies, favorite places to go, or whatever categories seem appropriate. Have each student introduce his or her classmate using a relative clause in the first introductory sentence, followed by other information. Prior to the activity, give students a few examples such as the following:
- I'd like to introduce Rav, who likes to play video games.
 - This is Sonia, who moved to Chicago in October.
- For high intermediate or advanced level students, this activity could also be used for practice with *whose* relative clauses. However, since this type of relative clause is seldom used in conversational English, it would be appropriate to use for a writing activity in which students summarize an oral interview. A few examples such as these could suggest topics within such clauses that students could use for their reports:
- I interviewed Rodrigo, whose family came here from Honduras.
 - Petra, whose first language is Dutch, started learning English when she was 12.
 - I had the opportunity to talk with Felice, whose major is computer science.
5. **Meaning.** Frodesen and Eyring (2007) suggest that students be given a worksheet of sentences with relative clauses but no punctuation. They would have to decide whether the relative clause was restrictive or nonrestrictive and why. Then they would have to explain their decision to a partner and add punctuation as needed. For example:
- a. the teacher who got married in June will not be returning next year
 - b. in New York I'm going shopping at Saks Fifth Avenue which is located in downtown Manhattan

6. **Form.** Frodesen and Eyring (2007) suggest giving the students a list of evaluative adjectives, such as *annoying*, *disappointing*, *exasperating*, *expensive*, *frightening*, *surprising*, *boring*, and *stressful*, and asking students to use one of these adjectives in a nonrestrictive clause in order to make a comment on the main clause. The students should be told to comment on something that has happened to them; for example:

I had to wait in line for 30 minutes at the post office, which was very annoying.

My nephew broke my favorite vase, which was very disappointing.

7. **Meaning.** As an additional review of the distinctions between restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses, find a passage that has examples of both. Ask students to underline each restrictive clause and put brackets around each nonrestrictive clause, including reduced relative adverb clauses. Then discuss the functions of each type. The following are excerpts from a news article with the clauses identified:

Linda B. Buck, [who shared the 2004 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for deciphering the workings of the sense of smell], has retracted two scientific papers after she and her colleagues were unable to repeat the findings.

The retractions, [which did not concern the work for which Dr. Buck won the Nobel], were published Thursday on the Web sites of the journals where the papers appeared. One had been published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in 2005, the other in the journal *Science* in 2006.

The retractions follow a separate one, two years ago, of a paper by Dr. Buck that was published in the journal *Nature* in 2001.

For all three papers, [which looked at the olfactory system in mice], the first author was Zihua Zou, a postdoctoral researcher who conducted the experiments.

(Nobel Laureate Retracts Two Papers Unrelated to Her Prize, by Kenneth Chang, *The New York Times*, September 23, 2010)

8. **Form.** Frodesen and Eyring (2007) suggest that students first practice relative adverbs by completing sentences such as these:

I'd like to know the date (day, year, century) when ...

I'd like to know the place (city, country, etc.) where ...

I wish I knew the reason(s) why ...

I'm interested in finding out how ...

9. **Form.** As Tao and McCarthy (2001) revealed, in spoken English, nonrestrictive relative clauses most frequently occur after a main clause, not within it, and often express some kind of evaluation (attitude, opinion) of the speaker toward an event or situation previously described. To provide listening and speaking practice with this type of nonrestrictive clause, the teacher can tell students some of the things that she did or that happened to her during the past week, including an evaluation *which*-clause for each. After saying each, the teacher can write it on the board or a slide so students will have a model for their own practice. For example:

Last week I got a message on Facebook from an old high school friend, which was such a nice surprise.

On Friday my car broke down on the freeway, which really upset me!

This weekend I read all of the stories you wrote about your families, which I certainly enjoyed.

The teacher can then ask students in small groups or pairs to tell each other things that they did or that happened to them, using a *which*-clause at the end to comment on it. Students can be called on afterward to share some of their statements with the class as a

whole. If the teacher thinks that students might need more guided practice before working in groups, she could ask a few students to volunteer information about something they did, following with a question such as “How did you feel about that?” or “How did you like it?” The students’ responses could then be transformed into statements with *which*-clauses. For example:

Teacher: Silvia, tell us something that you did this past weekend.

Silvia: Well, on Sunday afternoon I went skating at the indoor ice rink.

Teacher: How did you like it?

Silvia: Oh, it was a lot of fun!

Teacher writes on the board: *I went skating at the indoor ice rink, which was a lot of fun.*

10. **Form:** For practice using relative adverb clauses, ask students in small groups to brainstorm three or more reasons why they (or someone else) should do something and to write each reason as a complete sentence. Examples:

What are some reasons why you should get a college education?

What are some reasons why everyone should learn to play a sport?

What are some reasons why one should learn a second language?

Prior to group work, provide a few sample answers as models:

One reason why you should learn a second language is that you can better communicate with more people worldwide.

Another reason why you should learn a second language is that it exercises your brain!

11. **Form.** As an Internet-based writing activity, Frodesen and Eyring (2007) suggest that students research the year when they were born and find four or five interesting facts that took place during that year. Each student should write down his or her findings in sentences using relative adverb clauses, as in this example:

October 17, 1989 was the day when a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck San Francisco.

Students can share one or more of their responses either in small groups or as a class. Where appropriate, the instructor can ask them to express variant forms, e.g., deleting the head noun in the example above to produce: “October 17, 1989 was when ...”. This can be followed by discussion of when it might be best to include head nouns with relative adverbs.

12. **Use.** Using concordancers to find authentic examples is one of the best ways to help advanced students become more familiar with the more formal variants of relative adverbs, e.g., those forms with [preposition + *which*] following a head noun. Students can be asked to find and write down several examples of these constructions from COCA by entering phrases such as the following in the search box:

the day on which

a time in which

the point at which

a situation in which

Our last two examples reflect the fact, discussed in this chapter, that head nouns for place relative adverbs in formal registers tend to be logical rather than spatial. Also, while the form *the reason for which* is grammatical, we omit it since it is extremely rare even in this large corpus. (It is always a good idea to check frequencies first to make sure that ample examples exist!)

In discussing their corpus findings, students can consider the following: (1) to what extent the relative adverb *when* or *where* could replace the full forms (head noun + preposition + *which*); (2) what the stylistic effect would be if the preposition + *which* were replaced by *when* or *where*.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Give an example sentence to illustrate each of the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| a. relative adverb substitution | f. appositive |
| b. free relative substitution | g. nonrestrictive relative clause |
| c. relative pronoun + <i>be</i> deletion | (i.) appositive type |
| d. head noun deletion | (ii.) evaluative type |
| e. relative adverb deletion | |

2. Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences:

- The place where he lived is unknown.
- The boys running in the marathon were very athletic.
- This is the time we will do it.

3. Why are the following sentences ungrammatical?

- *Christmas is the time at which when he's busiest.
- *Any teacher, who is dedicated, must work hard.
- *This is the office I work.
- *Engineers, many of which have never met Kilbey, are very proud of his work.
- *Burt will have raised \$20,000 by the time when the fund-raising drive ends.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

4. The following were produced by learners of English. What would you say to the learners?

- *I took that course with Mr. Hall, which is an excellent teacher.
- *That is the way how he drives.
- *Cooking is the thing what he enjoys.

5. One of your students asks you to explain the difference in meaning between the following two sentences. How will you respond?

My sister, who lives in Chicago, has two children.

My sister who lives in Chicago has two children.

6. Try to order the following sentences along a formality/register continuum according to what has been discussed in this chapter as well as using your own intuitions. How could you make your students aware of the register differences among these sentence types?

Do you recall why he resigned?

Do you recall the reason why he resigned?

Do you recall the reason he resigned?

Do you recall the reason for which he resigned?

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For a good reference on the analysis of nonrestrictive relative clauses that supplements Stockwell, Schachter, and Partee (1973), see:

Thompson, S. A. (1971). The deep structure of relative clauses. In C. J. Fillmore & D. T. Langendoen (Eds.), *Studies in linguistic semantics*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

For an alternative analysis of relative clauses that accounts for the usual data, as well as idioms like “the headway that John made,” refer to:

Schachter, P. (1973). Focus and relativization. *Language*, 49(1), 14–46.

For suggestions regarding the teaching of nonrestrictive relative clauses, see:

Bland, S. K. (with Savage, A., & Mayer, P.). (2008). *Grammar sense: Advanced grammar and writing 4*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Cake, C. D. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure though content 5*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Frodesen, J., & Eyring, J. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 4* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning

Porter, P., & van Dommelen, D. (2005). *Read, write, edit: Grammar for college writers*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

For suggestions on how to teach relative adverb clauses, see:

Frodesen, J., & Eyring, J. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 4* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Endnotes

1. The bits of information are, of course related to one another, but the meaning of one clause is not dependent upon the other as is the case with sentences containing restrictive relative clauses.
2. It is possible for a restrictive relative clause to modify a proper noun if there is more than one person or thing that could be referred to by the name, e.g. “I’m talking about the Marsha who’s in our class, not the one who works at the store.” In such cases, the so-called proper noun is functioning as a common noun.
3. Other verbs may also be involved in this reduction, but *be* is far and away the most frequent.
4. It should be noted that the term *continuative*, as Looock uses it here to describe a type of clause referring to a noun phrase, is not how Tao and McCarthy use *continuative*, which they use to refer to a preceding clause or clauses.
5. We have already noted several times above that not all six variants are possible for all relative adverbs; for example, sentences like type 4 would not be possible if the relative adverb were *how* in the phrase *the way how*. Also, our use of the term “variants” refers to their syntax; it does not mean that they are interchangeable. For instance, register can make a difference. Johansson and Hofland (1989) found that the relative pronoun *that* was more frequent in imaginative texts in the LOB corpus, whereas *which* dominated informational texts.

Focus and Emphasis

Introduction

In communicative settings, speakers and writers of English are able to draw attention to particular parts of a message in a variety of linguistic ways. They do so to emphasize or to make prominent new or contrastive information. Consider the following underlined words and phrases in sentences from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA):

- a. I have always loved the arts. I myself have no talent.
- b. Add your favorite recipes to your very own Recipe Book...
- c. A number of mushrooms are poisonous or even lethal. Under no circumstances should you gather fungi without expert guidance.
- d. Sitting at the otherwise empty curb was a black SUV...
- e. It is the Congress that has the responsibility to act.
- f. What we need is tax cuts for the middle class who are struggling.

All of these examples reflect special focus or emphasis on information created either by changing what is considered unmarked (usual) ordering of sentence constituents or by adding emphatic words. These examples illustrate some of the linguistic devices discussed in this chapter.

In English, focus and emphasis are related notions; however, the constructions used for focus center primarily on issues of use, whereas the words and structures used to express emphasis are primarily concerned with meaning. Focus and emphasis can be expressed in three different ways: (1) phonologically (through special stress and intonation), (2) lexically (through special words and phrases), and (3) syntactically (through marked word order or special focus constructions). We will present the form, meaning, and use of these devices in this chapter, giving particular emphasis to the syntactic means for conveying focus and emphasis in English.

Many other languages use phonological, lexical, and syntactic means to guide listeners' and readers' interpretations of elements receiving focus and emphasis. Some may use forms similar to English. French speakers, for example, can focus on sentence elements through what we call *cleft structures*, as illustrated in English in example (e): *It is the Congress...*). Other languages, such as German, Brazilian Portuguese, and Spanish have focusing constructions similar to the *wh-* construction, called a *pseudocleft*, as in example (f). However, some forms of emphasis and focus that appear similar to English constructions, for example, Modern Greek, Italian, Finnish, Bulgarian, and Polish's pseudocleft constructions, cannot be interpreted in the same ways (Iatridou & Varlokosta, 1998). Then, too, many languages use shifts in word order for focus. In English, we may move elements for focus to a sentence-initial or final position, as in examples (c) and (d),

respectively; in other languages, such as Hungarian, the focus position is immediately before the verb of a sentence. And unlike English, some languages use particles to mark contrastive focus, such as some uses of the particle *wa* in Japanese.

We should also mention that some linguists have challenged the notion of focus as a pragmatic feature that can be defined in a uniform way cross-linguistically. Matic' and Wedgwood (2013) argue that the meanings of focus must be interpreted in reference to individual languages and contextual variables. Consequently, though English learners may have ways of indicating focus and emphasis in their L1s that appear similar to those in English, they may need to learn the ways in which listeners and readers should interpret the English constructions.

The Forms That Focus and Emphasis Can Take

PHONOLOGICAL FORM

Consider the following sentence:

John cooked the dinner.

When produced in a normal, unmarked style, the speaker stresses the accented syllable of the last content word and uses this syllable as a pivot for the rising-falling intonation contour that normally accompanies a declarative English sentence what is referred to as a 2-3-1 pattern:

John cooked the dinner.

However, a nonemphatic sentence such as this one may contain an emphatic constituent if the speaker assigns special stress or prominence to one of the constituents (see also our earlier discussion of focused *yes/no* questions in Chapter 11):

JOHN cooked the dinner. (not someone else)

John **COOKED** the dinner. (as opposed to doing something else with respect to the dinner)

John cooked the **DIN**ner. (not something else)

In these cases, the stressed (or prominent) syllable also serves as the pivot for a marked intonation contour.

LEXICAL DEVICES

English also has lexical means for expressing special emphasis.

Emphatic Do

An entire sentence receives greater emphasis if the auxiliary is stressed. *Do* is introduced when no auxiliary verb is present to carry emphatic stress:

That *would* be nice!

It *doés* taste nice!

Do occurs as a marker of emphasis in affirmative declarative sentences (like the one on the right) that have no *be* copula or auxiliary verb to serve as the stress-bearing operator. It also occurs in the two following constructions:

- Affirmative *wh*-questions that ask about the subject (other auxiliary verbs may occur with stress here too)

What *díd* hàppen?

**Who { *doés* } earn that kind of mònney?
{ *cán* }**

What wás hàppening?

- Emphatic affirmative imperatives (even for those imperatives with the copula, *do* is the only auxiliary used here)

***Dó* come in!**

***Dó* be cívil this time.**

Emphatic Reflexive Pronouns

Emphatic reflexive pronouns generally follow the nouns they refer to, as in these examples from COCA:

The president *himself* has insisted that he is in good health... (*International News*, 2012)

No doubt the mssionaries had been assured that I was a conservative, well-brought-up girl. I *myself* could not dispute that. (*Miss Timmins' School for Girls*, Harper, 2011)

The artists *themselves* rarely saved their work. (*Smithsonian*, August 2004)

However, it is also possible to postpone the reflexive pronoun emphasizing the subject and put it at the end of a clause or sentence:

***He* called me *himself* and told me he wasn't coming...** (*Sports News*, 2012)

This use of reflexives is different from their referential use, which was discussed in Chapter 16 (e.g., *John cut himself*), in that they do not replace a coreferential noun phrase but occur after a noun phrase and refer back to it to make it more emphatic. They are also different from the adverbial use of reflexives that means "all alone; without assistance." When used with the latter meaning, the reflexive pronoun is often preceded by the preposition *by*:

Mike built several Earthships [by] *himself*, but soon he was coaching an army of Earthship builders. (*Mother Earth News*, Feb/March 2012)

Emphatic Own

Possessive determiners (and sometimes nouns with a possessive inflection) that modify a head noun can be made emphatic by the addition of *own*, which in turn can be intensified by the addition of *very*, illustrated by the following examples from COCA:

It takes a real effort to remind myself of my *own* priorities, to remember that life is not always about accomplishment. (*Good Housekeeping*, January 2012)

At the end of the day, nothing's better, it's said, than falling asleep in your *very own* bed. (*The Saturday Evening Post*, May/June 2011)

Emphatic Adjectives and Adverbs

Certain adjectives and adverbs can be used for emphasis, too, emphatic adjectives that are reference adjectives, occur only in attributive position (see Chapter 20):

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a pure delight | * That delight is pure. |
| an outright lie | * This lie is outright. |
| a mere child | * The child is mere. |

There are also totality and amplifying adjectives, which may occur in both attributive and predicative positions:

a complete victory

The victory was complete.

their extreme condemnation

Their condemnation was extreme.

his great folly

His folly was great.

Totality and amplifying emphatic adverbs intensify adjectives and verbs:

That is totally untrue.

I utterly regret having done that.

I really hope you come.

Emphatic Logical Connectors

Halliday and Hasan (1976) suggest that some logical connectors are more emphatic than others. Thus, for expressing addition, *and* is a nonemphatic connector, whereas *furthermore*, *moreover*, and some others are emphatic and thus not appropriate unless the discourse context merits special emphasis with respect to the logic of the connection (see Chapter 26 for more discussion on when to use *furthermore* and *moreover*):

John went to the store, and he bought some bread.

?John went to the store; { **furthermore,**
moreover, } **he bought some bread.**

John talked us into going out for dinner; moreover, he insisted on paying the bill.

SYNTACTIC MEANS : MARKED WORD ORDER

Marked word order can be defined as the movement of a constituent into a position in the sentence where we would not ordinarily expect to find it (i.e., it would *not* be generated by the phrase structure rules in that position). Sometimes other syntactic elements present in the sentence must be moved around to produce a grammatical sentence. The reasons for employing word-order focus that have most frequently been identified and described are discourse constraints (e.g., the management of given and new information) and the expression of counterexpectancy, contrast, or emphasis.

Next, we outline several different types of marked word order.

Object-Subject-Verb Word Order

Fronting the object to first position in a sentence tends to be a stylistic feature of spoken rather than written English. The following examples from COCA include speech from fiction, television news, and an oral interview:

"I'll tell the grocer. Him I see every day." (*City of Many Days*, Mercury House, 1993)

"Her I would have thrown out of the courtroom..." (*CNN Crossfire*, 1993)

"Such people I know only in the most casual way, yet with them I can be more myself."
(*Christian Century*, Sept. 2002)

Fronted objects can appear in contexts where a strong contrast is being made:

Him I like; her I don't. (I like him but I don't [like] her.)

John I can comprehend; the others speak gibberish. (I can comprehend John—but the others speak gibberish.)

In other cases, a speaker may echo part of a previous sentence that has unmarked word order. In this following speech example from COCA, the first two clauses are normal word order, but in the third clause, the same phrase, *some things*, is a fronted object, keeping the focus on the topic:

Some things worked, some things didn't. Some things I'd change. (Fox Baier, 2011)

In general, if a contrast is not explicitly stated, the contrastive meaning is either recoverable from previous linguistic context, or it can be inferred from the larger discourse context, if not shared knowledge.

Predicate Adjective/Noun Fronting

Fronting a predicate adjective or noun to initial position is also a possibility in certain written genres, such as fiction:

Ambitious she must have been, or she wouldn't have come.

A professor he was, but in name only.

In addition to an appropriate discourse context explicitly or implicitly mentioning the fronted item, most orderings seem to require a clause or phrase that follows the sentence with the inversion. The following clause or phrase is needed to make explicit the counter-expectation or contrast implied by the inversion.

Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) note that initial predicate adjectives in dependent clauses followed by *as* or *though* may also occur, as in this example from the Longman Spoken and Written English corpus (LSWE) (p. 908):

Astounded though she was, Francesca was thrilled and excited.

There are also a few common expressions with fronted predicate adjectives, such as the following, which use this emphatic pattern with reference to preceding discourse:

Right you are. I'm from... Vancouver. Canada. (Analog Science Fiction and Fact, Jan/Feb 2011)

Right he is, you'll agree ... (Chicago Sun Times, 1994)

Teaching fronted expressions such as these as lexical bundles can be particularly useful for ESL/EFL students in developing their comprehension of informal English.

Fronting with Subject-Operator Inversion

In some instances, fronting a negative adverbial constituent (e.g., *never, not, in no way*) or an adverbial constituent expressing extent, degree, or comparison (e.g., [*so* + ADJ]) gives a more emphatic or exclamatory reading to the sentence as a whole. In such cases, subject-operator inversion is required. The following are examples from COCA:

Negative fronting:

...never have I felt so honored and humbled by an experience. (USA Today, Jan 2011)

Under no circumstances should you hit 'Reply All' in response to a company-wide message unless every single person needs to read what you have to say. (PC World, Sept. 2011)

Extent/degree/comparison fronting:

So absurd was the request, he felt like laughing. (Ransom, Pocket Books, 1999)

Even more shocking were the identities of the two men behind [the diabolical plan.] (ABC 20/20 March 27, 2009)

Several constituents other than noun phrases, adjectives, and adverbials regularly get fronted in a similar manner; in these cases, subject-operator inversion also occurs:

Present participle fronting:

Lying on the bench before him was a row of metal instruments. (*Analog Science Fiction & Fact*, Dec. 2007)

Past participle fronting:

Hidden behind the wall was a brick fireplace. (*Walk Two Moons*, HarperTrophy, 1996)

However, as Bresnan (1994) correctly points out, the locative element in such participle fronting examples is often quite strong (*on the bench before him; behind the wall*) and if the locative adverbial is deleted, the sentence becomes less grammatical:

?**Lying was a row of metal instruments.**

?**Hidden was a brick fireplace.**

But if there is no participle, the sentences seem fine; they are simply cases of an initial adverbial prepositional phrase with required inversion of the subject and operator:

On the bench before him was a row of metal instruments.

(***On the bench before him a row of metal instruments was.**)

Behind the wall was a brick fireplace.

(***Behind the wall a brick fireplace was.**)

Fronting with or without Subject-Verb Inversion

Two other instances of fronting occur that seem somewhere between these two categories; i.e., they involve fronted adverbials and are grammatical whether or not the subject and main verb (not the operator, but the verb) are also inverted. Thus, for these two following instances of adverbial fronting, two types of adverbial fronting are possible:

Adverbials of direction:

John ran into the house. { a. **Into the house John ran.**
b. **Into the house ran John.**

Adverbials of position:

An elm tree stands in the garden. { a. **In the garden an elm tree { stands }
*is² } .**
b. **In the garden { stands }
is } an elm tree.**

In both of these cases the (a) seems to signal discourse emphasis or contrast of the initial adverbial element, whereas the (b) version of the two sentences appears to give focus to the delayed subject of the sentence. It is the inverted (b) versions that are of particular interest to us here and will be discussed again later in the use section.

SPECIAL FOCUS CONSTRUCTIONS

The two most important focus constructions in English are passive voice and existential *there*, which have already been discussed in Chapters 18 and 23, respectively. Two other important focus constructions, which we discuss here, are *it*-clefts and *wh*-clefts. A cleft sentence divides

a proposition into two parts. As a consequence, speakers can put into focus either part, i.e., the topic or the comment (Hedberg, 2013).

It-Clefts

An *it*-cleft is a specially marked construction that puts some constituent, typically an NP, into focus. In some cases, such as in fiction, this construction is used to put focus on settings of time and place such as the following examples:

It was on the eighth morning that I saw the distant sail... ("Journey into the Kingdom," M. Rickert, *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, May, 2006)

It was at the dean's annual holiday party that David met Deborah. (*A Man in Thrall*, John J. Clayton, Vol. 128, Iss. 4, 2009)

It was in Room 311 that doctors and scientists had the courage to criticize one another. (*Monday Mornings: A Novel*, Sanjay Gupta, Grand Central Publishing, 2012)

In other contexts, the construction implies contrast, especially when the constituent is an NP and the verb tense of the sentence is present, expressing a current or habitual fact.

Unmarked: **John wants a car.**

Cleft: **It's a car that John wants (not a house).**

Unmarked: **The manager mows the lawn.**

Cleft: **It's the manager who mows the lawn (not a gardener).**

It is difficult to formulate a rule that would generate all *it*-clefts since many different constituents such as subject NPs, object NPs, and even prepositional phrases and adverbial clauses can be put into the focus position that follows *it* + *be*:

It's the teacher who corrects the papers (not the aide).

It's power that the president wants (not money).

It's in the kitchen that I study (not in the den).

It was because he was jealous that Bobby lied about his sister's prize (not for some other reason).

In each case, not only can the negative presupposition be expressed overtly, but if it is, it can be moved forward; for example, *It's the teacher, not the aide, who corrects the papers*. Note that a negated version of this construction yields sentences like the following (i.e., if the focus is negative, the affirmative presupposition is contrastive and is often expressed in a phrase marked by *but*):

It's not the gardener who mows the lawn (but the manager).

Again, the contrastive presupposition may be moved forward if it is expressed overtly:

It's not the gardener, but the manager, who mows the lawn.

The following formula is, therefore, an approximation for describing an *it*-cleft:

$$S \rightarrow it + AUX + be + (not) + \begin{array}{c} \triangle \\ \text{focused} \\ \text{constituent} \end{array} + \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{who} \\ \text{that} \end{array} \right\} + S$$

(minus focused constituent)

It has been argued (e.g., Hedberg, 2000) that the *it* in the cleft sentence is referential. It refers to the topic of the sentence. In addition, our use of the "AUX" symbol in the cleft formula is a gross approximation. It has been suggested to us that only the "tense" constituent of the auxiliary should be used in the *it* + *be* segment of the rule, rather than the entire auxiliary. The logic behind this suggestion is that in Standard North American English, the *it* + *be* segment of the cleft can never take a phrasal modal, a *have* ...-*en* (perfective), or a *be* ...-*ing* (progressive):

It's in the kitchen that I am able to study.

***It is able to study that I am in the kitchen.**

It's these books that Peter has written.

***It's have written these books that Peter has done.**

It's the teacher who was correcting the papers.

?It's correcting the papers that the teacher was (doing).

(In some dialects of English, these sentences are possible, especially the last one.)

It is, however, possible for the *it + be* segment of a cleft to contain a modal auxiliary (logical use) in Standard North American English:

It might be Marty who stole the money.

It must be the butler who killed Mr. Smith.

Also, it has been claimed that the tense of the *it + be* segment is merely a copy of the tense used in the main sentence. This claim is not always true, however, because clefts such as the following occur where different tenses are used in the *it + be* segment and the main sentence:

So, it's the butler who killed Mr. Smith (not his wife).

pres . past

Note that *who* may come between the focused constituent and the S only if the former refers to a person. Otherwise, *that* is used to refer to objects and prepositional phrases as well as to persons when the register is informal:

It must have been Paula that left this book for you.

Except for the presence of contrastive stress in cleft sentences, they sometimes resemble relative clauses. For example, note the ambiguity of the following sentence, a type that Schachter (1973) identified in his discussion of cleft sentences as focus constructions that sometimes resemble relative clauses:

It's the teaching assistant $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{that} \\ \text{who} \end{array} \right\}$ supervises the physics lab.

(answer to "Who's that?" = relative clause)

(answer to "Who supervises the physics lab—the teaching assistant or the professor?" = *it*-cleft)

When spoken, however, the sentence would have different stress patterns since the *it*-cleft reading would give special stress to *teaching assistant* and the relative clause reading would not.

Wh-Clefts

Wh-clefts (also referred to as *pseudoclefts*) are the other important focus construction in English that we discuss in this chapter. Consider the following examples:

What he is is a complete fool.

Where we found the key was in the flowerpot.

What I said was that we shouldn't go there.

What he does is get himself in trouble.³

Now compare these *wh*-clefts with their neutral counterparts:

He is a complete fool.

We found the key in the flowerpot.

I said that we shouldn't go there.

He gets himself in trouble.

The *wh*-cleft sentences give special emphasis to the constituent(s) following some form of the copula *be*:

What he is IS a complete fool.

(presumed shared knowledge: “he is something”) (element receiving focus, emphasis)

As these examples demonstrate, the constituent receiving special focus can be a noun phrase, a prepositional phrase, an embedded noun clause (see Chapters 31 and 32) or a verb phrase. If there are two forms of the verb *be* present, the second one is the pivotal *be* structure.

Wh-Clefts versus Free Relatives

Wh-clefts should not be confused with the less emphatic free relative clause construction discussed in the preceding chapter.

Wh-cleft:

What I said was that we shouldn't go there.

Free relative:

What he said doesn't concern me.

In the free relative, the *what* = *the thing that*, and there is no pivotal form of *be*. Also, in the free relative, *what he said* functions as the subject of the sentence. In the *wh*-cleft, there is a pivotal form of *be* (i.e., *was*), and the initial *wh*-clause, *what I said*, gets elaborated and put into focus in the material that comes after the pivot, *that we shouldn't go there*.

Free relatives can occur wherever NPs normally occur, so they can occur as objects of verbs or prepositions as easily as they can occur as subjects:

I'm not interested in what he said. (free relative)

Wh-clefts can be reversed, although they occur primarily in initial position, as our examples above have shown:

We shouldn't go there was what I said.

A complete fool is what he is.

Demonstrative Wh-Clefts

It has been claimed that a type of cleft appears commonly, especially in spoken English, and has a demonstrative pronoun as its highlighted, or focused, element in reference to extended previous discourse, as in the following brief interview excerpt from COCA, spoken by a female politician:

I bring the experiences of women. As a daughter, as a mother, as a wife, as a sister.

That is who I am. (*Meet the Press*, 2006)

Collins (2006), found that the overwhelming majority of what look to be *wh*-clefts in the 500,000 London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English were of this type (98.9 percent of 262 tokens), with demonstrative pronouns *that* (about 67 percent) and *this* (about 23 percent) accounting for most of the highlighted elements (p. 1717). Similarly, Biber et al. (1999) identified many reversed *wh*-clefts with demonstrative pronouns as the focused element in the Longman Spoken and Written English corpus, primarily in conversational and fiction registers. They refer to these types as demonstrative *wh*-clefts (p. 961). We will discuss their uses further in a later section of this chapter.

Meaning and Use of Some Emphatic Forms

EMPHATIC USE OF *DO*

Emphatic *do* is used in at least five contexts, according to Frank (1993, p. 94):⁴

1. Affirmative contradictions of negative statements (often used with *but*):
My teacher claims that I didn't turn in my paper but I *did* turn it in.
2. Emphasis of a verb used with a preverbal adverb (see Chapter 25):
The horse he bet on always *did* win.
The guest we were waiting for never *did* arrive.
3. Emphasis of a positive outcome after some initial doubt.
I'm relieved to know that he *does* like beef stroganoff. (because that's what we're having for dinner)
4. Strong concession bordering on contrast:
Even though I dislike most nonclassical music, I *do* find myself drawn to Dixieland jazz.
5. Emphasis of a whole sentence (*do* often occurs with an intensifying adverb such as *certainly, really, definitely*):
I *certainly do* like that color on you.
They *definitely did* win the game.

When sentences contain auxiliary verbs that can be used as operators, the auxiliary verbs can be stressed in the same contexts as those identified above for emphatic use of *do*:

- You predict we won't win the match, but we *will* win. You wait and see!**
Aaron never *can* figure out problems like that.
I'm happy to hear you *are* planning to be there.
Although he hasn't made a donation this year, he *has* contributed generously in the past.

MEANING AND USE OF *OWN*

In nonemphatic sentences, the possessive (or genitive) case can be used to express an agent (e.g., *Holbein's portrait of Henry VIII*), a possessor (e.g., *Al's house*), kinship (e.g., *Chad's brother*), and so on (see Chapter 16). In contrast, the use of emphatic *own* with a possessive determiner or noun usually signals the meaning of ownership or special interest rather than other possible meanings of the possessive. The use of *own* to emphasize an agent is appropriate only when the person referred to in the possessive form is both the agent and the possessor of the head noun. There is a special construction in English for expressing this double relationship:

head noun + *of* + possessive form + *own* + gerund

- That's a problem of his own making.**
You will have an escort of your own choosing.

In another observation concerning *own*, Jespersen (1961) notes that emphatic reflexives and emphatic *own* often function as paraphrases of each other:⁵

- He cooks his own meals. He cooks his meals himself.**

COLLOQUIAL USE OF EMPHATIC *HERE* AND *THERE* WITH DEMONSTRATIVES

The English language also has many colloquial and dialectal markers of emphasis, such as the use of *here* and *there* to emphasize the demonstratives *this/these* and *that/those*, respectively:

This { a. here cow } has always given a lot of milk.
 { b. cow here }

What do you think of that { a. there house }?
 { b. house there }

All these sequences occur only in somewhat nonstandard colloquial usage; however, the (b) sentences represent a more acceptable variant than the (a) ones do.

USE OF MARKED WORD ORDER

What is the motivation for fronting adverbials of direction or position in sentences where subject-verb inversion also occurs?

Into the house ran John.

In the garden stands an elm tree.

A pilot study by Gary (1974) suggests that the speaker/writer has selected the subject NP—now in final position—to surprise the speaker/reader, create suspense, and specifically to go counter to the expectations of the listener/reader. For example, using texts such as the following, Gary claims that the counter-to-expectation function of the (b) version of the text-final sentence carries a special presupposition of counterexpectancy and that this contrasts with the neutral, noninverted (a) version, which has no special presuppositions:

Keith Sebastian had given me detailed instructions on how to find his house; he was to meet me there with the money. I drove up the driveway and got out of my car. Just as the car door closed, I heard the main door to the house open.

a. { Keith Sebastian } stepped out of the house.
 { Dan Carlyle }
 { The sheriff }

b. Out of the house stepped { #Keith Sebastian }
 { Dan Carlyle }
 { The sheriff }

(Note: # = not acceptable given the discourse context)

In the (b) version, *Keith Sebastian* is not acceptable as the postposed subject, according to Gary (1974), because there is no counterexpectancy; that is, the reader would normally expect *Keith Sebastian* to be the subject, just as he is in the first option of the (a) version, but given the use of the (b) construction, which signals counterexpectancy, the reader is invited to be surprised when someone else is the postposed subject.

Gary (1974) convincingly demonstrates that concepts such as definiteness versus indefiniteness or given information versus new information do not adequately explain this example—and the other examples he cites—as effectively as does the notion of counterexpectancy.

Gary (1974) provides evidence that use of present and past participle fronting may also signal surprise or counterexpectancy to the listener/reader in the same way that fronting of adverbials of direction and position do:⁶

Sitting in the front seat of the car was my cousin Joe.

Hidden at the back of my father's wine cellar was an old bottle of Chateau d'Yquem.

On the other hand, Gary does not feel that the fronting of negative or of degree or extent constituents accomplishes the same discourse function:

Never have I seen such a mess!

So absurd was his proposition that no one believed him.

We agree with Gary. Use of negative or degree/extent/comparison fronting reflects exclamatory speaker/writer stance rather than signaling the possibility of surprise or counterexpectation on the part of the listener/reader.

Gary (1974) used fiction as his source for examples. Yang (1989) used a larger and more diversified database that included transcribed speech, short stories, academic writing, and journalism. One interesting finding she made is that marked word order with inversion did not occur at all in her oral corpus (about 24,500 words), which had only one instance of direct object fronting: *John I like*. In her written corpus (about 70,000 words drawn from fiction, journalism, and academic writing), Yang found 29 instances of inverted word order, only 5 of which (17 percent) expressed contrast or counterexpectation. However, she found 16 cases (55 percent) where the marked word order with inversion served to maintain thematic continuity, and 8 cases (28 percent) where it established or resumed a topic.⁷

In the following example, thematic continuity is maintained through use of marked word order and inversion:

(A short *L.A. Times* article describes Mother Teresa's visit to South Africa. Having reported what Mother Teresa said upon arrival at the airport, the writer continues:)

Accompanying her (Mother Teresa) were four nuns who will run the new mission...

(Yang, 1989, p. 23)

Here, the present participle fronting and inversion serve to keep Mother Teresa as the initial noun phrase in the clause. The same goal could have been achieved, of course, by using passive voice (a focus construction we have discussed previously in Chapter 18).

She was accompanied by four nuns who ...

The following text begins a paragraph and is an example of using marked word order with inversion to introduce or present a character or participant:

Across the aisle was an elderly woman, dressed resolutely in black—dress, scarf, stockings, shoes. (paragraph continues to describe the old woman) (Yang, 1989, p.15)

Since the preceding paragraph had described another character in the short story, one might say that this construction is being used to express contrast in addition to introducing a new participant or topic. In fact, Yang acknowledges that the three discourse functions she identified can overlap and that often two occur in any one instance of marked and inverted word order.

There was at least one clear case of contrast (or counterexpectation) that Yang found in academic writing dealing with language acquisition:

These clause types are followed by relative clauses modifying common nouns in object position. Still missing at age 4 are relative clauses built on sentence subjects. (Yang, 1989, p. 20)

Birner (1994) also looked at a large number of naturally occurring tokens of sentences with inversion-type marked word order, and she proposes that "inversion serves an

information-packaging function: that of presenting information which is more familiar in the discourse before information which is less familiar” (p. 255). She also felt it was significant that information inferable from context was treated just as if it were given information (for purposes of inversion). Birner’s account, however, does not fully explain those cases where a sense of emphasis or contrast seems to be achieved through the use of inversion, which several of the examples from Gary (1974) and Yang (1989) have illustrated.

DIFFERENCES IN THE MEANING, USE, AND DISTRIBUTION OF *IT*-CLEFTS AND *WH*-CLEFTS

“*W[h]*-clefts and *it*-clefts have long been claimed to be interchangeable.” This opening to Prince’s pragmatic analysis of cleft structures in spoken and written English (Prince, 1978, p. 883) expressed a commonly held belief among linguists prior to her study, which showed that *it*-clefts and *wh*-clefts were not at all synonymous in terms of presupposition and function and that neither one should be derived from the other. Prince pointed out that the presupposed part of *wh*-clefts contains given information that the speaker assumes the hearer is thinking about (e.g., *What John lost* in the sentence *What John lost was his keys*), while the presupposed part of *it*-clefts contains information that the reader either knows or can deduce but is not thinking about (e.g., *that John lost* in the sentence *It was his keys that John lost*). She found that in *it*-clefts, the average length of the presupposed part is greater than the focused part, while the reverse is true for *wh*-clefts. She noted that the relative brevity of presupposed information in the *wh*-clefts reflects the pragmatic principle that for something known, speakers should use as few words as possible.

It-clefts, however, turned out to be more complicated. In further analyzing the uses of these structures in spoken and written texts, Prince distinguished two types of *it*-cleft sentences in English—stressed focus (SF) and informative-presupposition (IP). The former contains known information in its presupposed part and is used for emphasis, while the latter contains new information in its presupposed part and introduces this new information at the end of the sentence for rhetorical effect:

presupposed

Stressed focus: **It isn’t higher prices but changed expectations [that have caused people to buy more at the present time].**

presupposed

Informative-presupposition: **It was in 1979 [that Piet Kornhof rather boldly announced, “Apartheid is dead.”]**

In other words, in the first example, the listener is assumed to know that *something* has caused people to buy more; the contrastive new information is that it is something other than what people may have thought triggered the event. In the second example, the listener is presented with new, and not assumed to be known, information about Kornhof in the *that*-clause.

Distribution of It-Clefts and Wh-Clefts

Since Prince’s pioneering work, several corpus-based studies have provided more information about uses of *it*-clefts, basic *wh*-clefts and reverse *wh*-clefts, both within and across registers. We will first look at distribution of these constructions, followed by discussion of specific uses within spoken and written registers.

Kim (1988) examined a database of over 500,000 words (about 230,000 spoken and 290,000 written), identifying a total of 297 cleft constructions; *wh*-clefts occurred twice as frequently as *it*-clefts in the data overall. Comparing the distributions between the spoken and the written databases, Kim found a strong preference for *wh*-clefts in the spoken data—147 versus only

32 *it*-clefts—and a preference (through less marked) for *it*-clefts in the written data—68 versus 50 *wh*-clefts. Kim also found that definite NPs are frequently the focused element in *it*-clefts, which tend to have a contrastive function and to occur in planned discourse, whereas indefinite NPs are frequently the focused element in *wh*-clefts, which often function to present the speaker's perspective to the listener and tend to occur in unplanned discourse.

Collins (2006) analyzed cleft structures in the 500,000 word London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English (LLC), roughly twice as large as Kim's (1988) spoken corpus. The difference in the distribution of basic *wh*-clefts and *it*-clefts in this corpus of English conversation was not as striking as the spoken data Kim examined: Of a total of 294 cleft constructions, 168 were basic *wh*-clefts (57 percent) and 126 were *it*-clefts (43 percent). However, Collins also identified a large number of reverse *wh*-clefts: 262. If the numbers of basic and reversed *wh*-clefts are combined, they account for 77 percent of all the cleft constructions in the LLC corpus.

As in Kim's (1988) study, the findings of Biber et al. (1999) in the LSWE reveal that ordinary (basic) *wh*-clefts are most frequent in conversation in comparison to the registers of fiction, news and academic prose. *It*-clefts, while most frequent in academic writing, were not more frequent in the news register than either conversation or fiction (p. 961). Comparisons of *wh*-cleft distributions across studies are somewhat complicated by the fact that Biber et al. treat demonstrative *wh*-clefts (e.g., *That's what I thought*; *That's why we asked*.) as a category separate from reversed *wh*-clefts, whereas these types are included in Collins' reversed cleft examples and discussion. Biber et al.'s analysis finds that demonstrative *wh*-clefts represent by far the most frequent cleft structure in conversation, about triple the number of ordinary *wh*-clefts and, in fact, they occur more often than all the other types of cleft constructions combined.⁸ In terms of frequencies, then, these studies suggest that for pedagogical focus, the meanings and uses of *it*-clefts deserve a place in academic writing instruction, while *wh*-clefts in general and demonstrative *wh*-clefts in particular should be given attention especially for speaking contexts. Biber et al. note that for demonstrative *wh*-clefts, the two most commonly occurring patterns are (1) *that is/was/etc. what...* and (2) *that is/was/etc. why...*, as shown in examples above.

This would be as good a time as any to acknowledge that the frequency data we report in this book can be helpful, but they are also limited. What we mean is that frequency data are attested, i.e., they tell us what the linguistic record is; they don't tell us about the potential for change. They are also decontextualized and often monologic. Calude and Miller (2009) illustrate these points in their study of cleft use by New Zealand English speakers. Their study shows that when one speaker in a conversation uses a *it*-cleft or *wh*-cleft, the other conversation partner is likely to do so also. Or, in other words, as they say, "clefting is contagious!" (p. 127).

Use of It-Clefts in Writing

We have previously discussed the contrastive function of *it*-clefts in general. This contrast may be explicit, with a negative statement alongside the element of focus as illustrated earlier:

It's not the gardener, but the manager, who mows the lawn.

In academic prose, where *it*-clefts are most frequent, the contrastive element for an *it*-cleft is frequently implicit rather than explicit, and the focus element often links to information given in the previous context, as in this example from COCA:

Scientists estimate that there are 70 sextillion stars ... that's more stars than the total grains of sand on every beach and desert on Earth. Many of these stars have planets orbiting ... them. It is those planets that astrobiologists ... are paying particular attention to. (*Scholastic Scope*, 2011, Vol. 59.8)

In this example, the contrastive element of *those planets* inferable from the earlier context is "not the planets of our own solar system."

Biber et al. (1999) note that the focused elements of *it*-clefts are often pronouns or another form expressing given information (p. 962). In examples from academic writing in COCA, we note that such clefts often have a demonstrative determiner (*this, that, these, those*) and a classifier noun—that is, one that serves to categorize other nouns (e.g., *concept, issue, solution*), as the focus element; these noun phrases refer to previous information, creating cohesion.

A few other examples that we found of focus elements with this pattern in the academic corpus of COCA included *it is this voyage of discovery* and *it is these two dimensions*. While demonstrative pronouns alone may appear as focus elements in this manner, the demonstrative determiner + classifier noun pattern offers a clearer reference to the presupposed information. In many cases, the implicit contrastive element is quite general, with a meaning such as “not some other”/“not others” as in the following example from COCA in which the contrast might be “not other attitudes”:

**This study focused on the attitudes and beliefs of future and current teachers.
It is these attitudes that will determine the success of students with disabilities
in regular classes ...** (*Education*, 2004, Vol. 125.2)

Kim’s (1988) corpus of a variety of written genres revealed that the majority of *it*-clefts (about three-fourths) were of the stressed focus variety—that is, they were used to express the author’s emphasis or focus rather than to provide a backdrop for new information. Our examples from the academic texts appear to serve this function also. The sentences containing *it*-clefts with cohesive noun phrases that refer to previous text, such as *these attitudes*, tend to offer a summary or conclusion for previous discussion; the presupposed information in the relative clause appears to be inferable from the context.

Use of Wh-Clefts in Conversation

Kim (1995) carried out one of the most comprehensive studies of basic *wh*-clefts in English conversation. He identified 76 instances of *wh*-clefts in naturally occurring conversations and found that all but seven of the tokens had four types of verbs in the *wh*-clause (p. 251):

1. Verbs expressing a speaker-internal state (29 tokens): *realize, want, feel, think, enjoy, know, object to*, etc.
2. Verbs expressing a metalinguistic dimension (22 tokens): *mean, say, ask*, etc.
3. Verbs marking meta-events (12 tokens): *happen* [e.g., *What does happen is (that) there’s a tendency to forget this.*]
4. Verbs marking meta-actions (6 tokens): *do* (e.g., *What I’m doing right now is the vacuuming.*)

This suggests that the types of verbs used in conversational *wh*-clefts are highly constrained and give us a good general sense of the interactional functions of *wh*-clefts in informal spoken English, which according to Kim (1995, p. 253) are:

1. Discourse-organization uses, such as marking a topic shift or expressing the gist of prior talk:

Context: The therapist, Dan, marks the gist of exchanges between two teenagers, Ken and Louise, about how parents never get over treating offspring as children.

K: My father’s 45 or 43, an’ he’ll go over to my grandmother’s house, and instead a my grandmother offering him a drink of beer, she’ll say

L: Wanna glassa milk?

K: Wouldja like a peanut butter an' jelly sandwich?

D: So, in a way, *what you're saying* is you'll never get through that.

(adapted from Kim, 1995, p. 256)

2. Interactional management uses such as expressing or dealing with disagreement or initiating repair (see Schegloff, 1979):

Context: A is Brad Crandall, a talk show host, and B is the caller. They are having a disagreement about the caller's Medicaid eligibility.

A: They won't be taking you off Medicaid.

B: They will!

A: So you would still be eligible. It wouldn't change your eligibility.

B: Well, *what I know* is they gave me a letter and they never sent me my Medicaid card.

(adapted from Kim, 1995, pp. 258–259)

3. Display of speaker affect:

Context: Louise is telling a story, and she self-interrupts and reformulates with a *wh*-cleft as an aside to add her affective stance.

...or like you come and they're talking—*what I love* is when they're talking about something—you know, "You had radio when you were a little girl?" (adapted from Kim, 1995, p. 266)

Kim (1995) concludes that "these various interactional uses cannot be explained from the informational perspective alone in terms of presupposition/focus or given/new, because what is consciously involved in them is the speaker's interactional exploitation of the grammatical form and the function of the *wh*-cleft as a stance marker" (p. 268). *Wh*-clefts are used by speakers to accomplish interactional tasks in ways that serve to convey their attitude toward their interlocutor(s) and towards the topic.

Collins's (2006) analysis of basic *wh*-clefts in conversation also identifies the topic summary function of these structures, the first of Kim's interactional uses. Collins points out that the length of *wh*-clauses is typically quite short, as we see in all of Kim's examples (i.e., *what you're saying*, *what I know*, *what I love*), indicating that the information that follows within the *wh*-clause is not new but can be inferred. In the few cases where the speaker is presenting new or partially new information (that is, not inferable), this is signaled by a longer *wh*-clause:

...but *what THEY were THINKING OF um—what they ARE thinking of and what they will probably come UP...* (adapted from Collins, 2006, p. 1715)

We noted earlier that the LLC had a very high frequency of reverse *wh*-clefts, almost half of the 556 cleft structures that Collins (2006) identified in this corpus. The focus element of many of these reverse *wh*-clefts is a demonstrative pronoun (e.g., *that's what I said*), a structure also very frequently found in conversation in the LSWE (Biber et al, 1999). Collins states that these demonstratives typically have extended anaphoric reference to the previous text. The information presented by the speaker is thus "old" in some way; even if it is not directly stated previously, the listener can infer it from the broader context. So this common type of reverse *wh*-cleft also serves as a summary or comment on the discourse rather than presenting new information, as in the following example in which a doctor explains why he stayed in the United States to serve patients rather than going to a developing country:

And when people nowadays, young medical students or nurses, say they need to – want to go to Africa or Dominican Republic – and God bless them for going and doing that – we have great places in this country that need young doctors and nurses to go

to, like our public hospitals, where the same problems you're going to see in third world countries are right there, right in our inner cities. We drive past them every day. And *that was why* I went to County (Hospital). (*NPR Fresh Air*, 2011, COCA)

In ESL/EFL instructional contexts, teachers can help learners become aware of these uses of reverse *wh*-clefts, especially as ways to signal and highlight reference to information previously discussed.

Conclusion

There are problems from the outset in trying to define focus and emphasis in English because they overlap with other topics, such as exclamation and intensification. In addition, emphasis and focus inhabit different linguistic domains. Emphasis is essentially a semantic notion, and we have shown that it may be signaled in many ways, including by the use of special stress and intonation patterns, choice of words, and so on. Focus, on the other hand, seems to be a discourse-functional notion, related to what the speaker/writer wants to draw the listener/reader's attention to in the ongoing discourse or text or making a comment on a previous discourse excerpt. As we have tried to point out, such attention can be activated through the use of marked word order and special focus constructions. We make no claim to having provided an exhaustive treatment of focus and emphasis in English, but we hope to have drawn attention to this important area.

Teaching Suggestions

- 1. Meaning.** For teaching *it*-cleft sentences, the teacher can give several examples showing how *it*-clefts embody certain presuppositions and differ from their normal affirmative and negative statement counterparts. For example:

| | |
|---|---|
| Sam studies physics. (Cue: He doesn't study chemistry.) It's physics that Sam studies, not chemistry. | John doesn't drive a Ford. (Cue: He drives a Buick.) It's not a Ford that John drives, but a Buick. |
| -or- | -or- |
| It's physics, not chemistry, that Sam studies. | It's not a Ford, but a Buick, that John drives. |

In groups of three, students should be given one 3×5 card, each with a false affirmative or negative statement as a cue. The statements will be about their fellow students. Provide an example of a mini-dialogue that makes natural use of an *it*-cleft construction. Then ask the students to write a similar dialogue based on information on the card.

Example cue card: Kim comes from Hong Kong. (It's a false statement.)⁹

Sample student-generated dialogue:

Student 1: Is anyone in this class from Hong Kong?

Student 2: Yes, Kim comes from Hong Kong.

Student 3: No, he doesn't. $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{It's Lee who comes from Hong Kong, not Kim.} \\ \text{It's Korea that Kim comes from, not Hong Kong.} \end{array} \right.$

These dialogues can then be presented to the class as a whole for evaluation and correction.

2. **Meaning.** You might want to try the following sequence of activities for teaching subject emphatic reflexives.

a. Show the class sentences with subject emphatic reflexives:

1. The owner himself built the house.
2. Did you yourself have a good time?

b. Read these sentences and have the class repeat. Ask them to paraphrase the sentences and to describe the function of the reflexive pronoun.

c. Show the class several picture cards with sentences and have students supply correct reflexive pronouns to emphasize the subjects. For example:



Cue: Mary made the dress.

Student 1: Mary herself made the dress.

d. Then a student selects a card, and someone else in the class asks a *yes/no* question based on the card. The student who selected the card should give a meaningful response. For example:

Student 1: Did you yourself make that dress?

Student 2: Yes, I did. / No, I didn't. My mother did.

3. **Meaning.** Emphatic *do* might be introduced using the following context:

a. The teacher can give the class practice in using emphatic *do* to contradict negative statements by giving some false negative statements as a cue and then putting an edited version of the dialogue on the board. For example:

Teacher: Ali, you didn't turn in your homework.

Ali: But I did turn in my homework. I gave it to you a few minutes ago.

b. The class should discuss the function of *do* in such a dialogue.

c. The students are divided into small groups and asked to write a dialogue that incorporates use of emphatic *do* to contradict a false negative statement.

d. The dialogues are performed in front of the class, evaluated, and corrected.

4. **Use.** Fronting directional adverbs. Read a short paragraph or anecdote to your class. For example:

Everyone but Harry had arrived on time for the meeting. We waited 15 minutes. There still was no sign of Harry. We had just decided to proceed without him, when into the conference room dashed Harry!

Ask them about the word order of the last clause of the last sentence. Why does the adverb clause come first? See if they can explain the fact that the others had decided Harry wouldn't come, and when he did, they were surprised because their expectation that Harry would not come turned out to be false.

Divide the class into small groups and give each group a sentence involving some class member(s) with the directional adverb fronted (e.g., *Out of the house came Maria and Rosa.*). Have each group write a paragraph that uses the inverted cue sentence as the

last sentence. Groups will then exchange paragraphs so that each group can evaluate the appropriateness of the inverted sentence to the rest of the story.

5. **Form/Use.** For practice using *wh*-clefts to highlight information, divide students into groups of three or four and tell them they are to imagine they are planning a sightseeing trip together to a city or an area of the country. After deciding on a location (perhaps from a list of suggestions), the group members should research the location on the Internet and make a list of five or six things they would like to do, see, go to, and so on. The list can include things that the entire group would like to do as well as ones that individuals would particularly want to include. Ask them to write each travel “wish list” item beginning with a *wh*-cleft, providing some examples based on a location, such as the following.

Our group is planning a trip to Boston.

What we'd all like to do is tour Paul Revere's house and walk the Freedom Trail.

What Lila and Ramon want to do is go to a Celtics game.

What Viva would like to eat is Boston cream pie.

Where Yunjie wants to go is the famous Museum of Science.

When they are finished with their lists, ask each group to tell the class where they are planning to go and what they would like to do, see, etc.

6. **Form/Use.** To practice the use of demonstrative reverse *wh*-clefts as summary statements in contexts where learners have some planning time, the teacher can model a brief informal, oral presentation or written paragraph that closes a topic with a reverse cleft (e.g., after explaining her career choice: *So that is why I decided to become an English teacher*; after an explanation for a Microsoft PowerPoint procedure: *So that is how you insert a video clip into a PowerPoint slide*). Students can then be asked to write a script for an oral presentation or written paragraph on topics that would prompt such use as a closing sentence. Possible topics could be the following:

Why you chose your major field of study

Why you chose to come to school

Why someone should visit your hometown or native country

How to do something (procedure for a sport, hobby, experiment, computer application, etc.)

What you hope to accomplish in the next five years

7. **Use.** To help advanced level students gain an understanding of how *it*-clefts are used in writing to point back to previous information and emphasize a topic for further discussion, show them an authentic excerpt such as the following, accessed from COCA using the search [. It is these] (Note: The period must be included and separated by a space to avoid thousands of irrelevant examples of *it is*.)

Preventing groundwater pollution requires looking not merely at individual factories, gas stations, cornfields, and dry cleaning plants, but at the entire social, industrial, and agricultural systems these businesses are a part of. It is these ecologically untenable systems that are poisoning the world's water. The predominant system of high-input agriculture not only shrinks biodiversity with its vast monocultures, it overwhelms the land—and the underlying water—with its massive applications of agricultural chemicals. The system of car-dominated, geographically expanding cities generates unsustainable amounts of climate—disrupting greenhouse gases and acid rain—causing air pollutants. Moreover, it floods aquifers and soils with petrochemicals, heavy metals, and sewage. An adequate response will require a thoughtful overhaul of each of these systems. (“The Hidden Threat of Groundwater Pollution,” *USA Today Magazine*, 2001, Vol. 130, Issue 2674, p. 28)

Ask students to identify the previous information that the focus element of the *it*-clause refers to and to discuss how what follows relates to the information in the *it*-cleft clause. (In this example, the relative clause in the *it*-cleft introduces the topic of the following discussion, which elaborates how the three massive systems are poisoning the water supply.) Students could be asked to find other examples of this type of *it*-cleft if they are familiar with using COCA or other concordancers. If this kind of focus might be appropriate for writing topics students are currently working on, they could review their drafts to see if an *it*-cleft construction might help to focus reader attention on a topic. Or they could be reminded of this focusing strategy for later use in extended writing assignments.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide example sentences that illustrate the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples.

| | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>wh</i>-cleft b. reverse <i>wh</i>-cleft c. <i>it</i>-cleft d. fronting of a directional adverbial | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> e. emphatic <i>do</i> f. emphatic reflexive g. emphatic possessive |
|--|--|
2. Why are the following sentences ungrammatical (or at best awkward)?
 - a. *On his car a bumper sticker is: Have you hugged your kid today?
 - b. *What we meant to say we are sorry.
 - c. *He is Robert who wrote the letter. (not someone else)
3. Explain the ambiguity in the following sentences:
 - a. It's the graduate student who corrects the papers in our class.
 - b. Our chairman criticized the dean himself.
4. Do the following sentences illustrate *wh*-clefts or free relatives? Give reasons to support your choice of construction:
 - a. I forgot what he said.
 - b. A big lie is what he told.
 - c. What he said is of little concern to us.
 - d. What he said is that you are a good friend.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

5. The following were produced by ESL/EFL students. What would you tell them?
 - a. *Never I have tasted such a delicious sandwich!
 - b. *Who you mean is that Oscar did it.
 - c. *Sitting on the front porch my long-lost brother was.
6. Develop a mini-lesson for teaching the appropriate use of sentence-initial negative constituents (e.g., Under no circumstances will we tolerate that!) to an advanced ESL/EFL class.

7. Describe differences in use or meaning, if any, in the following pairs of sentences:

- a. (1) What he said is that he wasn't coming.
(2) He said that he wasn't coming.
- b. (1) The misbehaving child was standing in the corner.
(2) Standing in the corner was the misbehaving child.
- c. (1) Come back again.
(2) Do come back again.
- d. (1) Why doesn't Jim use his book?
(2) Why doesn't Jim use his own book?

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For a discussion of *it*-cleft sentences, relative clauses, and their similarities and differences, see:

Schachter, P. (1973). Focus and relativization. *Language*, 49(1), 19–46.

The relationship between *it*-cleft and pseudocleft (i.e., *wh*-cleft) sentences is explored in the following sources:

Gundel, J. K. (1977). Where do cleft sentences come from? *Language*, 53(3), 343–359.

Jacobs, R. (1995). *English syntax: A grammar for English language professionals*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 171–183.

Prince, E. (1978). A comparison of *wh*-clefts and *it*-clefts in discourse. *Language*, 54(4), 883–906.

The discourse significance of several adverbial fronting and participle fronting rules is explored in the following source:

Gary, N. (1974). *A discourse analysis of certain root transformations in English* (Unpublished Linguistics paper). University of California, Los Angeles, CA. (Reproduced and distributed by the Indiana University Linguistics Club.)

For an excellent description of the use of *wh*-clefts in English conversation, see:

Kim, K.-H. (1995). *Wh*-clefts and left-dislocation in English conversation. In P. Downing & M. Noonan (Eds.), *Word order in discourse* (pp. 245–296). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

For a discussion of the role of prosody in cleft structures, including *it*-clefts, *wh*-clefts, and reverse *wh*-clefts in English conversation, see:

Collins, P. (2006). *It*-clefts and *wh*-clefts: Prosody and pragmatics. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38, 1706–1720.

For a discussion of (1) emphatic *do*, (2) emphatic adjectives and/or adverbs, and (3) emphatic use of reflexives, see the following sources:

Frank, M. (1993). *Modern English: A practical reference guide* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Regents.

Quirk, R., & Greenbaum, S. (1973). *A concise grammar of contemporary English*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

For a discussion of emphatic logical connectors, see:

Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London, England: Longman.

For some useful information about focus and emphasis in general, see:

Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1975). *A communicative grammar of English*. London, England: Longman.

For useful discussions of the inverted sentences discussed in this chapter, see:

Birner, B. J. (1994). Information status and word order: An analysis of English inversion. *Language*, 70(2), 232–259.

Emonds, J. (1976). *A transformational approach to English syntax: Root, structure preserving, and local transformations*. New York, NY: Academic Press.

For a discussion of the diversity in the meanings of focus cross-linguistically, see:

Matić, D., & Wedgwood, D. (2012). The meanings of focus: The significance of an interpretation-based category in cross-linguistic analysis. *Journal of Linguistics*, 49, 127–163.

For cross-linguistic discussions of focus in the areas of semantics and intonation, see:

Lee, C., Gordon, M., & Büring, D. (Eds.). (2007). *Topic and focus: Cross-linguistic perspectives on meaning and intonation: Studies in linguistics and philosophy* (Vol. 82). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Teaching materials for the topics covered in this chapter are rare. For some exercises for teaching emphatic reflexives, see:

Frank, M. (1975). *Modern English: Exercises for nonnative speakers*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

For a suggestion on teaching emphatic own, see:

Rutherford, W. (1977). *Modern English* (2nd ed., Vol. 2). New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

For a general overview of emphasis and focus with exercises, see:

Danielson, D., & Porter, P. (with Hayden, R.). (1990). *Using English: Your second language* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.

For a unit covering forms, meanings, and uses of fronted structures, see:

Frodesen, J., & Eyring, J. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 4* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For a unit treating *it*-clefts and *wh*-clefts, see:

Frodesen, J., & Eyring, J. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 4* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For coverage of *it*-clefts using a content-based approach, see:

Cake, C. D. (2005). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 5*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Endnotes

1. The accent marks used in these examples and some of those that follow refer to primary sentence stress (´) and secondary sentence stress (˘).
2. Note that in such cases, the copula *be* is not grammatical in final position because *be* is not a full lexical verb, and therefore, subject-verb inversion or subject-auxiliary inversion must occur if adverbial fronting or sentence initial generation occurs with *be* as the verb. Note that the lexical verbs in such sentences must be intransitive.
3. As Jacobs (1995) points out, when the constituent in focus is a verb phrase, the *wh*-clause ends with a form of *do* instead of another verb if there is no auxiliary verb. His example is (p.178):
What Henry has done is develop a better mousetrap.
Jacobs also points out that if a noun phrase referring to a person is the focused item, the *wh*-clause is often embedded in a noun phrase beginning with *the person who, the one who*, etc. (p.179):
The one who advocated stronger action was Palmerston.
4. As Frank (1993) notes, Elizabethan English also used *do* in nonemphatic affirmative sentences in variation with the simple present (p. 94):
Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all. (Shakespeare in Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 1)
5. Jespersen (1961) goes so far as to suggest that *own* is the genitive form of *-self*.
6. As Bresnan (1994) points out, the locative prepositional phrase in such participles is critical; the words *sitting* and *hidden* could be deleted.
7. Bresnan (1994) also discusses presentation or resumption of participants as a motivation for using such a construction.
8. Biber et al. (1999) included “related expressions” such as *all I did was, all it takes is* in their counts of ordinary *wh*-clefts.
9. This type of exercise is a version of Rutherford’s (1974) false presupposition drill.

surprising when learners, whose native languages have complement constructions like those in German or French, produce sentences like the following when they speak or write in English:

***I want that you (should) come.**

Another factor is that English has more complement types than most other languages. English distinguishes between *that*-clauses, infinitive complements, and gerund complements (all of which have subtypes), whereas most languages have only the equivalent of *that*-clauses and infinitive complements:

That-clause: **I believe that I have extra time this weekend.**

Infinitive: **I would like to go to the movies.**

Gerund: **I enjoy going to the movies.**

That-clause and infinitive complements are more universal and unmarked than are gerunds. Since they are also much more frequent than gerunds, it is not surprising that many learners produce ungrammatical sentences like the following:

***I enjoy to go to the movies.**

Therefore, we might expect ESL/EFL learners to experience the greatest difficulty acquiring gerund complements. Research by Anderson (1976) and Butoyi (1978) indicate that this is in fact the case for English learners from several diverse language backgrounds (namely, Spanish, Japanese, and Persian). However, infinitive complements pose a learning challenge, too. Chan (2010) examined the written errors of Hong Kong Cantonese English learners and reported that the students wrote sentences such as:

***My mother usually cooks something nice eat to me.**

Here the *eat to me* should be *for me to eat*. Chan points out that the English words are a translation equivalent of the individual words in Cantonese. They are, therefore, semantically matched, but not syntactically so.

Another reason for learners' errors may simply be that they are induced by a different kind of meaning-analogy, whereby students overgeneralize from a known complement construction and produce a similar but erroneous form by following the known pattern:

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| The general commanded him to leave. | → | *My father demanded me to study. |
| I like to study math. | → | *I dislike to study history. |
| My sister advised me to study abroad. | → | *My friend recommended me to stay home. |
| The teacher allowed us to leave class early. | → | *My parents let us to stay up late. |

In this chapter, we discuss verbs that take clausal complements. These complements consist of five types:¹

1. Full clausal *that*-complements with tensed verbs
2. Tenseless subjunctive *that*-complements
3. Infinitive complements
4. Gerund complements
5. Noun-participle constructions

These five types of clausal complements are associated with the occurrence of certain verbs. Because there are many types of clausal complements, and because the relation between verb and complement type often seems arbitrary, the grammar of clausal complementation is somewhat complex to learn. While this chapter deals with postverbal complements, the following chapter will cover other issues and constructions, including adjectives and nouns that take complement clauses.

The Form of Complements

ORDINARY *THAT*-COMPLEMENTS

Tensed *that*-clauses are one of the most frequent types of clausal complement, especially in conversation and fiction (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999):

Scientists claim [that the earth is getting warmer].

We expected [that nothing worthwhile would come from our efforts].

Most people know [that bears don't make good pets].

Notice that the material inside the brackets looks exactly like an ordinary clause except that it is prefaced by *that*. In each bracketed clause, there is a subject and a verb, and there may be various types of additional information, such as what one would find in an ordinary sentence. What is different is that these bracketed clauses cannot stand by themselves as acceptable sequences so long as they begin with *that*:

***That the earth is getting warmer.**

***That nothing worthwhile would come from our efforts.**

***That bears don't make good pets.**

As with the adverbial clauses discussed in Chapter 25, such clauses are called *dependent* clauses because they depend on, or require the presence of, another clause to which they are attached in some way. Moreover, in each full sentence given here, the dependent *that*-clause seems to stand in a position in which an NP might ordinarily stand. The verbs *claim*, *expect*, and *know* may take simple NPs as objects under other circumstances:

Scientists often claim [great discoveries].

We expected [nothing else].

Most people know [the answer].

This suggests that we should regard these dependent clauses as nounlike in nature and say that they are *embedded* into larger, independent clauses, forming an integral part of them—in these cases, as direct objects. Additional evidence to support the belief that the embedded clauses are nounlike is the fact that they behave like the corresponding NPs: in all such cases, the bracketed material can appear in a passive sentence as the subject—that is, in another position where NPs occur:

[Great discoveries] are often claimed by scientists.

[That the earth is getting warmer] is claimed by scientists.

[Nothing else] was expected by us.

[That nothing worthwhile would come from our efforts] was long expected by us.

[The answer] is known by most people.

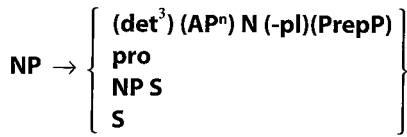
[That bears don't make good pets] is known by most people.²

At this point, we can argue that these embedded clauses are indeed behaving like noun phrases. A third piece of evidence for the NP status of these clauses is that each *that*-clause here answers the typical nounlike question *what?* just as each case of a simple NP object does:

Question: **What do scientists often claim?** → Answer: **Great discoveries.**

Question: **What do scientists often claim?** → Answer: **That the earth is getting warmer.**

One way to incorporate this new possibility into our grammar is to add S to the phrase-structure rule for the expansion of NPs:



In other words, it is possible for an S to function as an NP.

What sort of word is *that*, and where do we place it in the tree? It should be clear that this use of *that* is not the same as the word *that* in relative clauses (see Chapters 28 and 29). It does not replace a full NP in the same way as the relative pronoun *that* does:

This is the shop *that* I told you about. (*that* = *shop*)

Scientists claim *that* the earth is getting warmer. (*that* = ?)

Nor is *that* in these complement clauses identical to the demonstrative determiner *that* (see Chapter 16); not only does it not replace an NP, but it also cannot receive emphatic or contrastive stress in the same way that a demonstrative can:

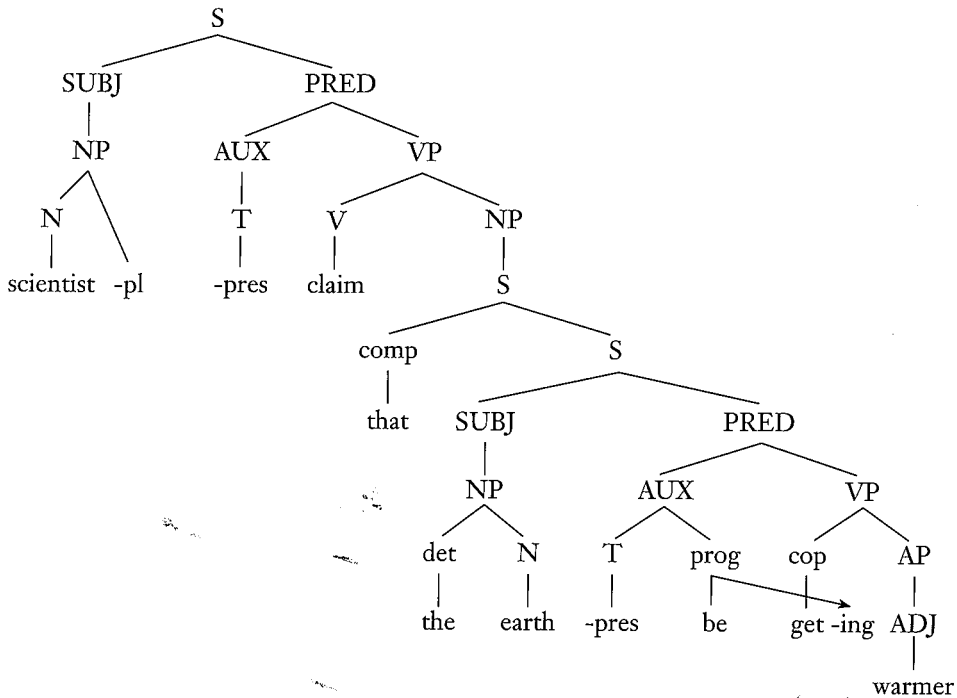
***That's* the type of bird I was telling you about.**

We should pay attention to *this* sign, not *that* one.

?Scientists claim *that* the earth is getting warmer.

Indeed, it is hard to see what sort of contrast could possibly be intended in the last example. Thus, in the case of complement clauses, it seems that we have a third type of *that*, one we shall call a “*complementizer*,” a signal of a complement clause. This complementizer is neither of the noun/pronoun category nor of any other grammatical category that we have introduced so far in this book. We will abbreviate it in the tree as “*comp*,” and we will place it under S, in a position adjacent to (and to the left of) the embedded S:

Scientists claim that the earth is getting warmer.



We also have to expand the options for rewriting the rule for S to include an optional complementizer as follows:³

S → (comp) (smⁿ) S

We must leave the complementizer optional both because simple, single-clause sentences do not require them and because it is possible for complement clauses like those given here to appear without *that* in informal speech:

Scientists claim the earth is getting warmer.

Most people know bears don't make good pets.

Later in this chapter, we will discuss some reasons why *that* might be included or omitted in such clauses.

There are many verbs that permit or require tensed *that*-complements as objects. Besides *believe*, *claim*, *expect*, and *know*, among the more common are *assume*, *conclude*, *decide*, *discover*, *explain*, *feel*, *find*, *find out*, *guess*, *hear*, *hope*, *imagine*, *learn*, *mean*, *notice*, *perceive*, *point out*, *promise*, *prove*, *realize*, *recognize*, *say*, *see*, *show*, *suggest*, *suppose*, *think*, *understand*, and *wish*. For example:

The lecturer explained that the source of the error was human.

The dealer promised that my car would be fixed for free.

New evidence shows that broccoli sprouts are more healthful than broccoli.

SUBJUNCTIVE COMPLEMENTS

An additional type of *that*-clause is superficially similar to the type discussed previously, but different in that the form of the verb in the embedded clause does not vary, regardless of whether the subject is first, second, or third person or singular/plural, and regardless of time reference. Such clauses are called *subjunctive complements*, as in the cases shown here:

They insist [that all the students *sign up* for counselors].

They insist [that this student *sign up* for a counselor].

The third person singular present tense *-s* is absent from the *that*-clause, and past-tense forms are also ungrammatical as the following examples show:

***They insist that this student *signs up* for a counselor.**

***The customer demanded that the store *returned* his money.**

The fact that the embedded verb is never inflected or altered in any way suggests that in forming a subjunctive, one uses only the base form of the verb; the resulting clauses are then without any sort of tense at all. Further evidence for this claim is that where the verb in the embedded clause is the copula *be* or the auxiliary *be* (in a passive, progressive, or phrasal modal), only the base form is employed after *insist* and *demand*:

We insist that he *be* the one to make the call.

The customer demanded that his money *be* returned.

Further evidence comes from negative sentences. In subjunctive clauses, a negative element is always placed directly before the main verb, and no *do* operator is possible:

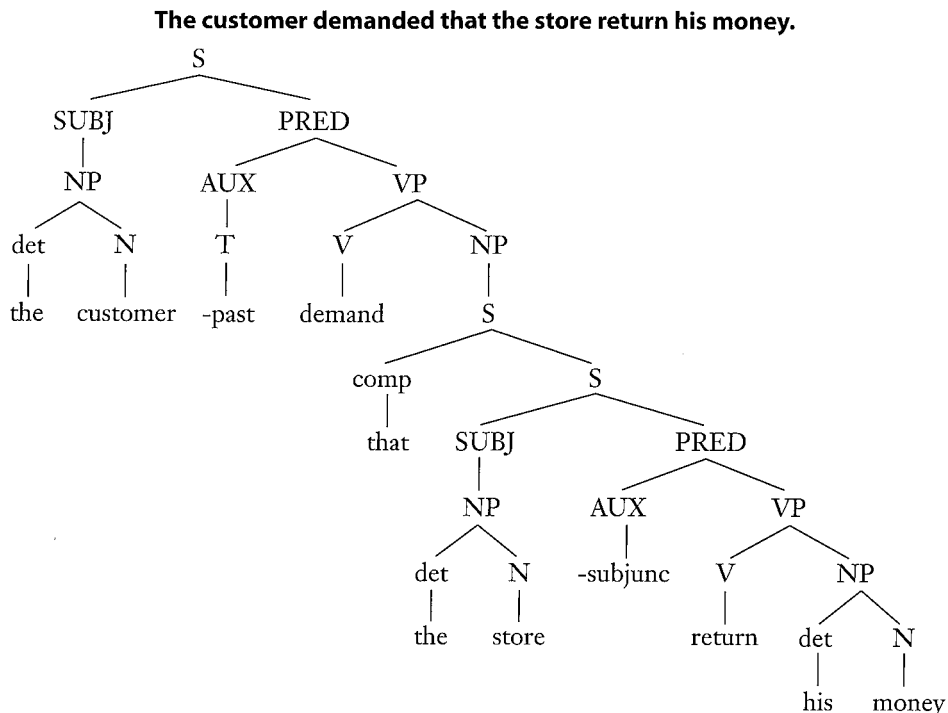
We insist that he *not make* the telephone call.

***We insist that he $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} do \\ does \end{array} \right\}$ *not make* the telephone call.**

Without present or past tense in the clause, it should be clear that our expansion rule for AUX will have to allow for the possibility of a tenseless AUX node. Although we could do this by using the [-imper] (imperative mood) option, there is no obvious semantic correspondence between imperative mood and subjunctive mood. Thus, we prefer to add a new option to our phrase structure rule for the auxiliary to account for sentences with subjunctive complements:

AUX $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} T \\ M \end{array} \right\} \text{ (pm) (perf) (prog) (pass) } \\ \text{-imper} \\ \text{-subjunc} \end{array} \right\}$

The tree for a subjunctive sentence, then, would look like the one here:



According to the PS rules, modal auxiliaries will not appear in subjunctive clauses; in general, this holds true, although many people do accept *should* or *had to* after *insist*, perhaps employing a modal or phrasal modal to express the increasingly archaic subjunctive mood:

We insisted that he (should/had to) take the test again.

Besides occurring after *insist* and *demand*, the subjunctive appears in embedded clauses after main-clause verbs of urging and advice such as *ask* (meaning “request”), *prefer*, *propose*, *recommend*, *request*, *require*, and *suggest*. Such sentences are highly formal and occur infrequently in current English.

INFINITIVE COMPLEMENTS

We have now expanded our notion of “clause” somewhat to include subject-verb sequences without tenses. Infinitives (so called because they are not finite or tensed) are an additional, and far more common, type of tenseless clause than subjunctive *that*-clauses. They also exhibit considerable syntactic variation since they have five subtypes (even within the subtypes, there is variation), each of which we discuss in turn:

1. *believe* type: **The students believe their professor to be amazing.**
2. *advise* type: **We advised them to play baseball in the park.**
3. *attempt* type: **I attempted to avoid the ice on the road.**
4. *want* type: **I want to clean the house.**
(*for/to* infinitive): **I want (for) him to clean the house.**
5. *let* type: **The teacher let the students go home early. (bare stem)**

We will not be presenting trees and phrase structure rules for the remainder of this chapter because we have found such representations to be needlessly complex for pedagogical purposes.

Believe-Type Infinitives

The first type of infinitive follows main-clause verbs like *believe* and *imagine*, which also co-occurred with *that*-complements. However, in this case, the bracketed parts of the sentences here show no evidence of tense:

a. The students believed [their professor to be amazing].

b. The citizens imagined [the politician to have led an honest life].

If these past-tense main verbs are changed to indicate future time or present-habitual time, for example, nothing inside the brackets will change:

c. The students will no doubt believe [their professor to be amazing].

d. The citizens imagine [the politician to have led an honest life].

In what sense, then, can infinitives be considered clauses? Like other clauses that we have considered, they seem to possess both subjects and verbs. While there may be no marking of tense, there does seem to be a marker—the infinitive *to*—which marks infinitive complements as part of the embedded verb phrase (VP).

We cannot have infinitive *to* co-occurring with a modal verb, but we can have phrasal modal, perfect, progressive, and perfect progressive infinitives (we treat passive infinitives in Chapter 32):

***The students believe [their professor to can do almost anything].**

The students believe [their professor to be able to do good research].

The students believe [their professor to have received her Ph.D.].

The students believe [their professor to be correcting their homework].

The students believe [their professor to have been lecturing too much lately].

The next question to answer is what position these infinitives occupy in the structure of the whole sentence. Are they direct object NPs as we argued for *that*-clauses? The answer seems doubtful since if these infinitival clauses are NPs, we might expect them to appear in other NP positions, such as subject position. Yet they cannot appear as subjects of passive verbs in the way that *that*-complement clauses can:

***[Their professor to be amazing] was believed by all the students.**

***[The politician to have led an honest life] was imagined by the citizens.**

This type of *believe* infinitive also has a peculiar characteristic: although we have argued that infinitives have subjects, this “subject” has some of the characteristics of a direct object within the main clause VP. When the subject of the infinitive is a pronoun, it will take object form, not subject form, perhaps due to the influence of the preceding main verb or due to the absence of subject-verb agreement:

The students believe [her to be amazing].

***The students believe [she to be amazing].**

The citizens imagine [him to have led an honest life].

***The citizens imagine [he to have led an honest life].**

At the same time, we cannot really view these pronouns (or the NPs for which they substitute) as true direct objects of the verbs *believe* and *imagine*, in spite of the fact that the pronouns occur in the objective case. We cannot ask the question,

Who(m) do the students believe?

and get as our answer, **Her, to be amazing*. Nor can we ask the question,

Who do the citizens imagine?

and receive the answer, **Him, to have led an honest life*. The fact that verbs like *believe* take complements that may have object-pronoun subjects has made the analysis of this type of infinitive an ongoing challenge for linguists.⁴ Some other mental cognition verbs that take

this type of infinitive complement include *assume, find, know, perceive, prove, show, think, and understand*:

The players assumed their opponents to have practiced more.

They found the box to contain more money than they had expected.

The geologists knew the hills to contain gold deposits.

We perceived them to be uninterested in our proposal.

Advise-Type Infinitives

There is a second, similar, though not exactly identical, class of verbs followed by infinitive complements. Consider the following sentences:

We advised the children to play baseball in the park.

The police officer ordered my friend to move his car.

In these cases, we get better results when we ask *who*-type questions:

Question: **Who(m) did we advise?**

Answer: **The children/them. (We advised them to play baseball in the park.)**

Question: **Who(m) did the police officer order?**

Answer: **My friend/him. (He ordered him to move his car.)**

As in the case of the first type of infinitive (i.e., the *believe* type), we can substitute an object pronoun for the NP following the *advise*-type verbs:

We advised *them* to play baseball in the park.

The police officer ordered *him* to move his car.

However, the main clauses here seem to have real objects, i.e., *them* and *him* (whereas the *believe*- and *expect*-clauses did not). Thus, we must ask what the status of the rest of the infinitive is. We could analyze the remainder of the infinitive as a complement to this object. Yet if we wish to say that all infinitives are clauses, and since we have presented all clauses in the past as bearing subjects, then we must ask what occupies the subject position of these infinitives. Our solution is to say that there is an empty subject slot (<subj>), which is understood to signify the same NP as the object of the higher sentence. Thus, for *We advised the children* [<subj> *to play baseball in the park*], the understood subject of the infinitive is “the children.” Other verbs that fit this infinitive construction are manipulative verbs like *allow, cause, enable, force, get, help, permit, persuade, tell, and urge*:

Our parents allowed us to stay up late.

The wind caused the canopy to fall down.

I told my sister to wash the dishes.

Attempt-Type Infinitives

A third type of infinitive also involves an understood subject. In this case, however, the identical NP is not the object of the main clause, but its subject. Two main-clause verbs that belong to this infinitive type are *attempt* and *tend*:

The driver attempted to avoid the ice on the road.

Bears tend to eat voraciously in the spring.

As before, the infinitive is tenseless, and *to* is present; in this case, there is clearly no object at all. Infinitives following the verbs *attempt*⁵ and *tend* certainly cannot be construed as direct objects:

Question: **What did the driver attempt?** → Answer: **?To avoid the ice on the road.**

Question: ***What do bears tend?** → Answer: ***To eat voraciously in the spring.**

It is not possible that the agents who avoid or eat in these sentences could be anyone other than the main-clause subjects. Following our solution for the *advise*-type infinitives, we

say that in these cases, the main-clause subject provides us with the identity of the missing infinitival subject (<subj>):

The driver attempted [<subj> to avoid the ice on the road].

Bears tend [<subj> to eat voraciously in the spring].

This class of verbs also includes *begin, continue, decide, fail, forget, hope, manage, offer, proceed, promise, refuse, regret, remember, start, try*, and *vow*. Some example sentences are:

That radio station continues to play horrible music.

We proceeded to sell off most of our furniture.

She forgot to buy her books.

I promised (him) to work harder next time.

They are nearly all intransitive verbs when they appear with infinitives following them; however, the verb *promise* is an exception for many speakers.⁶

Want-Type Infinitives (For/To Infinitives)

A fourth class of main-clause verbs taking infinitive complements permits the option of either the subject or object of the main clause providing the infinitive with a logical subject. In the latter case, the object is overtly expressed, and in some cases, the subjects of the infinitives may be introduced with *for*:

1. a. **I want to refinish the furniture.**

b. **I want (for) him to refinish the furniture.**

2. a. **She intends to clean the house.**

b. **She intends (for) him to clean the house.**

In the (a) sentences in each pair, it is *I* and *She* who are doing the refinishing and cleaning; in these cases, we simply assign the same analysis as we did with the subject-control verbs like *attempt*.

The (b) sentences, which optionally introduced their infinitives with *for*, are clearly somehow different. Let us apply the same tests that we did earlier. We can attempt to ask the usual *Who/What* question that is normally associated with NP objects:

Question: **What do you want?** → Answer: { **?Him to refinish the furniture.**
For him to refinish the furniture.

Question: **What does she intend?** → Answer: { **?Him to clean the house.**
For him to clean the house.

English speakers tend to find the *for*-infinitive somewhat more acceptable here, suggesting that at least the *for*-infinitive may be seen as providing a prepositional object for the main-clause verb. At the same time, if we ask the *who*-question, we come up with unfavorable results, suggesting that the pronoun *him* is not by itself the direct object of the verbs *want* and *intend*:

Question: **Who(m) do you want?** → Answer: **?Him (to refinish the furniture).**

Question: **Who(m) do you intend?** → Answer: **?Him (to clean the house).**

In fact, if the infinitives appear in the passive voice, the sentences are equally grammatical and convey the same general idea:

I want (for) the furniture to be refinished by him.

She intends (for) the house to be cleaned by him.

This suggests that these verbs are much like *believe* when they do not co-occur with the same subject interpretation (i.e. the (a) versions given previously):

I want [(for) him to refinish the furniture].

She intends [(for) him to clean the house].

With some verbs such as *want*, *expect*, and *hope*, some speakers find the *for* preposition either overly colloquial, characteristic of some U.S. dialects, or both, and simply use other ways to express the same meaning. Other future-oriented and affective verbs in this class that occur more readily with *for* include *arrange*, *desire*, *expect*, *hate*, *hope*, *intend*, *like*, *love*, *plan*, and *prefer*; for example:

- The travel agent arranged (for us) to take another trip.**
- I would hate (for you) to be stranded in the cabin this winter.**
- The doctor would like (for me) to try some new pills.**
- I would love (for you) to visit Paris next year.**

With this class of verbs, the subject of the infinitive will vary, of course, depending on the presence or absence of a noun phrase or a *for*-prepositional phrase after the main verb. When either of these is present, the noun phrase or prepositional object is the subject of the infinitive; when there is no noun phrase or *for*-prepositional phrase after the verb, the subject of the main clause represents the subject of the infinitive. Adopting a cognitive linguistics perspective, Hamawand (2003) distinguishes ordinary *to*-infinitives from *for/to*-infinitives. He observes that speakers use *to*-infinitives when they want to indicate the speaker's involvement in the event and interest in its realization, whereas *for/to*-infinitives reflect the speaker's distance from the event and its realization.

Let-Type (Bare Stem) Infinitives

There is one more important type of infinitive complement that must be distinguished, although the main-clause verbs with which it occurs are quite limited. This type is often called the *bare-stem* infinitive, where the usual *to* is either optionally (e.g., *Grace helped us (to) prepare the meal*) or obligatorily absent:

- The teacher let the students go home early.**
- We saw our friend leave the station.**

Applying the usual test to determine whether bare-stem infinitives are objects of the main-clause verb, we get unacceptable results:

- Question: ***What did the teacher let?** → Answer: ***The students go home early.**
- Question: **What did we see?** → Answer: **?Our friend leave the station.**

Applying the test to see if the NPs *the students* and *our friend* are direct objects of the main-clause verb, we again get odd results:

- Question: ***Who(m) did the teacher let?** → Answer: ***The students (go home early).**
- Question: **Who(m) did you see?** → Answer: **?Our friend (leave the station).**

As with infinitives that follow instances of verbs of the *let/see* class, we cannot say that bare-stem infinitives are NP objects; we will assume that they are simply bare clausal complements to the main-clause verb with no expressed *to*:

- The teacher let [the students go home early].**
- We saw [our friend leave the station].**

As with several of the previous patterns, the subject of the bare-stem infinitive takes the object form if it is a pronoun:

- The teacher let them go home early.**
- We saw him leave the station.**

Verbs in this class other than *let* and *see* include *feel*, *have*, *bear*, *help*,⁷ *make*, and *watch*:

- We felt the door close behind us.**
- The teacher had us repeat the exercise.**
- Please help us (to) move our furniture.**

GERUND COMPLEMENTS

While *that*-clauses and infinitives are the most frequent complement types and cover a large range of postverbal constructions in English, there is an additional type of complement, sometimes called the *-ing* complement or *gerund*, which, although less frequent, also must be explained. Consider, then, an additional pair of sentences:

Ben disliked *making phone calls to Collin*.

Chris preferred *doing other things with her time*.

The italicized parts of these two sentences have some of the earmarks of other clauses we have seen—specifically, postverbal infinitives like those that follow *attempt*, where the understood subject of the complement is identical to the subject of the main clause:

Ben disliked [_{subj}] *making phone calls to Collin*. → Ben made phone calls to Collin.

Chris preferred [_{subj}] *doing other things with her time*. → Chris did other things with her time.

Although the *-ing* of a gerund is not the *-ing* of the progressive, it is an affix that attaches itself to a verb stem. Just as there were with infinitives, there does not seem to be any tense present. If we change the tense of *dislike* and *prefer* in these sentences, the complement does not change at all:

Ben will dislike *making phone calls to Collin*.

Chris prefers *doing other things with her time*.

In contrast to infinitives, however, the verbal elements in the sequences—*making* and *doing*—seem to have the characteristics of nouns. With the addition of *-ing*, verbs can regularly be made into nouns that can serve as subjects and objects of sentences:

What is most enjoyable for you? → Hiking is most enjoyable for me.

What do you enjoy? → I enjoy swimming.

The “*what*-ness” of these verbal nouns, or *gerunds*, extends to gerund clauses as well:

What did Ben dislike? → Making phone calls to Collin.

What did Chris prefer? → Doing other things with her time.

We conclude that these gerund clauses are NP objects that happen also to have the status of a clause.

Different from the understood identical subjects in these sentences, it is also possible to have a gerund clause with something that looks like an expressed subject:

Ben disliked Susan's *making phone calls to Collin*.

Chris prefers his *doing other things with his time*.

In each pair, we have what looks like an NP + possessive morpheme (*Susan's*) or a possessive determiner before the gerund noun. In both cases, we have the basic structure of NPs functioning as clauses; i.e., the possessive NP or possessive determiner fills the subject slot, and the gerund noun and what follows functions as the predicate:

Ben disliked [Susan's *making phone calls to Collin*] (Susan made phone calls to Collin.)

Chris prefers [his *doing other things with his time*] (He does/should do other things with his time.)

Other verbs that take gerund complements include *admit*, *appreciate*, *avoid*, *begin*, *continue*, *defend*, *deny*, *enjoy*, *feel*, *finish*, *forget*, *hate*, *hear*, *like*, *love*, *prefer*, *quit*, *recall*, *regret*, *remember*, *resume*, *risk*, *see*, *smell*, *start*, *stop*, and *try*. Some occur only with the identical subject pattern (e.g., *begin*, *continue*),

Lucia began walking at an early age.

some require possessive NP subjects that are different from the subject of the main clause (e.g., *appreciate*),

Her parents appreciated her early walking.

and some may occur in either construction (e.g., *enjoy*, *remember*).

They enjoyed watching her.

They enjoyed her taking her first steps.

Just as the *that* complementizer was optional in informal speech, so is the ʼs complementizer that accompanies the subjects of gerunds. When this is the case, a pronominal subject takes object form. In fact, Biber et al. (1999) found that the object form, illustrated here, is much more frequent than the possessive form (p. 750):

Ben disliked Susan making phone calls to Collin.

We shall return to this topic later in this chapter.

THE SUBJECT-PARTICIPLE COMPLEMENT

There is one additional complement type in which *-ing* appears, one that is superficially similar to the possessive gerund complement but that always has an NP or object pronoun in place of the possessive form. While the first three sentences shown here can be viewed as colloquial simplifications of the possessive gerund construction, the last three cannot; so we have a new structure here (i.e., the subject-participle complement):

Ben disliked [Susan making phone calls to Collin].

Chris prefers [him doing other things with his time].

I didn't like [them coming in here like that].

He doesn't want [the employees sitting around with nothing to do].

I watched [the ice melting in the sun].

The teacher had [the students drawing trees].

Once again, we have what looks like the general structure of a clause without a tense. In this case, it seems that we have a stable element to place in subject position, and it is plausible to say that the entire bracketed clause functions as a noun object. Often this type of participial clause occurs as the object of the preposition *with*, in which case it functions as an adverbial clause (see Chapter 25):

With [the employees sitting around with nothing to do], the firm won't survive.

With [the ice melting in the sun], there won't be any cold drinks left.

With [the students drawing trees], the teacher could relax.

Other verbs taking this sort of complement include *discover*, *feel*, *hate*, *have*, *bear*, *like*, *love*, *observe*, *prefer*, *recall*, *remember*, *see*, and *watch*. For example:

The authorities discovered the dog hiding behind the bushes.

We could feel the weather turning cold.

The tour leaders had us visiting museums day and night.

We observed the doves making their nest.

I remember John telling me the same story last year.

As with infinitive complements after *believe*-type verbs, the subjects of these complements appear as object forms if they are pronouns, as in the third and fifth sentences.

The Meaning of Verbs and Their Complement Clauses

As the previous discussion clearly shows, there are many clausal complementation options for English verbs. Much does seem idiosyncratic about [verb + complement] combinations, and it would be false to claim that no arbitrariness exists in this area of grammar. However, there is some regularity within this seemingly complex array of possibilities, and teachers who are aware of these regularities can draw students' attention to them.

Up to now, we have said that certain verbs take certain types of complements exclusively, while other verbs may occur with more than one type. We have said little about whether any sense can be made of the fact that *claim* takes a tensed *that*-complement, *insist* a subjunctive complement, *believe* either a *that*-complement or an infinitival one, *try* either an infinitival or a gerund complement, and *make* a bare infinitive. In fact, a loose correlation does seem to exist between the semantics of the main-clause verb and the type of complement it takes. The correlation has been sketched by Givón (1980; 1990).

VERBS TAKING *THAT*-COMPLEMENTS

The main verbs that take ordinary tensed *that*-complements tend mostly to denote mental states or attitudes regarding the truth of the proposition in the complement clause. Thus, to say

| | | | |
|---|---|------------|----------------------------|
| I | } | think | } that it will rain today. |
| | | assume | |
| | | imagine | |
| | | know | |
| | | understand | |
| | | say | |

is to state something about the nature of the particular belief—its relative strength, among other things (a topic that we will return to in the next chapter). Givón (1980; 1990) places such verbs in the *cognition-utterance* category and says that a sentence with such a verb is more loosely connected syntactically with the complement clause and not necessarily well integrated semantically with the complement clause. The first quality means that it is easy to detach a *that*-complement from its main clause, omit the complementizer, and be left with a perfectly well formed sentence; the second quality means that it is not at all necessary for the subject of the complement clause to be identical to any noun in the main clause.

VERBS TAKING INFINITIVE COMPLEMENTS

We can contrast cognition-utterance verbs with verbs that Givón (1980; 1990) calls *manipulative*; typically, these verbs take infinitival complements. *Manipulative* here means that an agent named in the main clause is in some way related to, or has some interest in, the real or hypothetical occurrence of the event that is depicted in the complement clause. Thus, in the sentences *Mary wanted John to return sooner* and *The teacher allowed the students to leave*, Mary and the teacher have an interest in John's returning and the students' leaving, respectively. According to Givón, such infinitives tend to be more integrated syntactically with their main clauses in that an infinitive cannot stand by itself as a sentence; it is more dependent syntactically on its main clause. The main clause and infinitive clause are also

much more likely than a main clause and a *that*-clause to share an NP referent—as in those cases where the subject of the infinitive is identical to an NP in the main clause:

Mary wanted [*<subj> to go*]. (embedded subject = Mary)

Mary told John [*<subj> to go*]. (embedded subject = John)

In the case of bare-stem infinitives (*Mary made John stay; John had the thief arrested*), there is even greater integration since there is no infinitive *to* present and a stronger sort of control or involvement is depicted: indeed, verbs like *let*, *make*, and *have*, together with their complements, are often called *causative* verbs or constructions since one agent (to one degree or another) is causing another to act. We return to causatives later in this chapter.

Givón's (1980; 1990) correlations are rough—there are many exceptions—and they may have limited pedagogical value for language teachers who seek to present English complement options systematically to their students. However, his description is of some value to teachers who wish to understand why English complement options pattern as they do. In a few cases, Givón's framework does make predictions where options exist in use, and here, ESL/EFL learners might benefit from some explanation. Consider the following sentences:

She helped them to pick cherries.

She helped them pick cherries.

In the first case, the woman mentioned may have provided a ladder to the cherry pickers, while in the second case, we are more likely to believe that she was actually picking the fruit together with the others. Her greater involvement is reflected in the use of a bare-stem infinitive. It thus makes sense that a corpus study like that of Lind (1983) finds bare-stem infinitives appearing six times more frequently with animate subjects than inanimate subjects when compared with *to*-infinitives.⁸

THE MEANING OF VERBS TAKING SUBJUNCTIVE *THAT*-COMPLEMENTS

As pointed out in Chapter 2, the subjunctive is one of the five moods of English—one of the five sentence types that systematically exhibits the speaker's/writer's attitude toward the proposition expressed in a sentence. Just as the interrogative involves the questioning of a proposition and the imperative marks a command, so the subjunctive exhibits the speaker's/writer's orientation toward bringing a certain state of affairs into being. Verbs that take subjunctive *that*-clauses are highly manipulative in a semantic sense. They co-occur with a relatively restricted set of verbs, which includes *advise*, *ask*, *demand*, *insist*, *recommend*, and *request*, and such subjunctives have no tense forms. This construction will be particularly difficult for ESL/EFL students since they have most likely been told or have assumed that every *that*-clause in English contains a tense. Yet the verbs that take subjunctive complements fit a special frame in which an agent, expressed or implied, in the main clause attempts to exert some control over the occurrence of the event in the embedded clause, usually through the action of a different agent that is the subject of the subjunctive clause. The verbs may express “weak” control (*suggest*, *recommend*), “strong” control suggesting the existence of one individual's authority over the other (*insist*, *demand*, *require*), or control of an in-between sort (*ask*, *request*).⁹ Thus, we get:

[from weaker to stronger control]

We suggest that you stay one more day.

The committee recommended that the plan be reconsidered.

We ask that you not smoke near this building.

He requested that they give him an extra week to finish the project.

The college requires that first-year students live in dormitories.

The auditor demanded that he be given all the records.

Verbs that simply express a *desire* for some event to occur—that is, without any evidence of influence or control at all—tend not to take subjunctive complements. Thus, we do not get a subjunctive complement with *hope*:

***She hoped that her husband get a better job.**

The relevant semantic feature of control also shows up when the subjunctive mood is used in complement clauses following certain main-clause adjectives like *important*, *imperative*, and *vital*, but not following other adjectives such as *understandable* (we will return to this construction in the following chapter):

It is important that she *be* given another chance.

It was imperative that we *act* immediately.

What is vital is that we not *become* overly anxious.

***It is understandable that she *be* given another chance.**

VERBS TAKING GERUND COMPLEMENTS VERSUS VERBS TAKING INFINITIVE COMPLEMENTS: THE BOLINGER PRINCIPLE

Verbs that require gerunds, such as *enjoy*, *risk*, *deny*, *avoid*, *appreciate*, *defend*, *quit*, and *stop*, among others, encode actions in the complement that are vivid, real, ongoing in the present, or completed in the past. They represent the success of the subject of the main verb—or the gerund—in accomplishing some outcome, which may be positive or negative (Bolinger, 1968):

Bob enjoys going to the movies. (= Bob succeeds in having a good time when he goes to movies.)

Sue avoided talking to Barry. (= Sue succeeded in not talking to Barry.)

This is very different from those main verbs taking infinitives that encode future or unfulfilled projections, rather than past or present accomplishments in the complement (Bolinger, 1968).

Mary wanted to see the play. (implies Mary did not see the play)

There is considerable overlap across the class of verbs that permit subject-control infinitive complements and those that permit subject-control gerund *-ing* complements. The overlap is illustrated in the italicized forms in the lists shown here:

Verbs taking infinitives: *begin*, *choose*, *continue*, *dare*, *expect*, *fail*, *forget*, *hate*, *hope*,
intend, *like*, *love*, *manage*, *prefer*, *proceed*, *promise*, *refuse*, *regret*,
remember, *start*, *tend*, *try*, *want*, *vow*

Verbs taking gerund-*ing*: *admit*, *appreciate*, *avoid*, *begin*, *continue*, *defend*, *deny*, *dislike*,
enjoy, *finish*, *forget*, *hate*, *like*, *love*, *prefer*, *quit*, *recall*, *regret*,
remember, *resume*, *risk*, *start*, *stop*, *try*

In many cases of overlap, a distinct meaning difference is implied. This difference is worth focusing on and pointing out to learners. In some cases, the difference in meaning is substantial. Consider the options with *forget*:

He forgot to buy the books.

He forgot buying the books.

In the sentence with the infinitive, no books were bought (because of forgetfulness), while the action described with the gerund in the second sentence actually happened (but was subsequently forgotten). The situation is similar with *remember*:

She remembered to do her homework.

She remembered doing her homework.

In the first case, the meaning may be paraphrased as “She recalled that she had to do her homework, and then she did it,” while the second sentence means “She did her homework, and then later she recalled that she had done it.”

Some degree of correlation exists between the choice of infinitives with events that are hypothetical, future, unfulfilled and the choice of gerunds with events that are real, vivid, and/or fulfilled, as pointed out by Bolinger (1968). In the case of these sentence pairs, this principle is substantiated. It is also supported in the case of the verb *try*. Compare the next two sentences:

Peter tried to go to Oxford University.

Peter tried going to Oxford University.

In the first instance, English speakers tend to interpret the sentence to mean that Peter wanted to go to Oxford but was not in fact able to attend the university; in the second, the preferred interpretation is that Peter did attend Oxford but did not stay. Compare also these two sentences:

I tried to call you, but I had left my phone at home.

I tried calling you, but your line was busy.

In the first instance, no calling took place; in the second, at least one (unsuccessful) call was made. Three other verbs for which So (1973) found that the majority of native speakers that he consulted perceived a difference in meaning between infinitives and gerunds, following Bolinger's (1968) principle, are *regret*, *prefer*, and *sense*.

It is also worthwhile to look at how Bolinger's (1968) principle holds up with a frequently occurring verb such as *like*. When someone expresses a desire to do something that he/she has not done before, it is common to use the modal construction *would like* and follow it with an infinitive. A gerund is much less acceptable if *would* precedes *like*:

I would like to go bungee jumping someday.

?I would like going bungee jumping someday.

On the other hand, if someone has already done bungee jumping and wishes to express an affection for that activity, the gerund form is strongly preferred:

I like going bungee jumping. (I just did it last week.)

While the Bolinger principle does not yield such clear distinctions for all the verbs that occur with both infinitives and gerunds, it does provide teachers with a partial explanation for students who want to understand those meaning differences that exist with verbs taking both infinitive and gerund complements. It also helps explain why certain verbs such as *enjoy* and *avoid* take only gerunds, and why others such as *hope* and *want* take only infinitives, and it reduces the learning burden for students in that they do not have to rely on their memory for which verbs take which complements. This is what we mean by teaching reasons, not only rules, where this is possible.

ASPECTUAL OPTIONS IN INFINITIVES AND GERUNDS

We have argued that infinitives have no tense markings and therefore do not by themselves express past versus non-past time. However, infinitives do express aspectual relationships of the sort discussed in Chapters 7 and 9. These include the full range of aspectual categories with the exception that the distinction between habitual (i.e., durative) and punctual (i.e., "one time") is lost in the simple form of the verb, as in the case of *drink*:

I want to drink espresso (regularly).

I want to drink espresso (tonight).

The sense of a specific ongoing activity is expressible with the progressive form:

I would prefer to be drinking espresso (right now).

The sense of the completion of one event prior to the occurrence of another may be expressed with the perfect form:

I would prefer not to have drunk so much espresso this evening.

In the immediately preceding example, the “drinking” occurs prior to the “preferring.” Perfect and progressive may be combined, just as they may in ordinary main clauses:

The local team proved to have been making progress.

In this case, the ongoing condition, the “making of progress,” is (at least to some extent) temporally prior to the “proving.”

Gerund forms are likewise not marked for tense, but they too may express aspectual distinctions. When a simple gerund is used, the distinction between perfective, habitual, and progressive is lost:¹⁰

She remembered drinking espresso (that night).

She remembered drinking espresso (during her three years in Italy).

She remembered drinking espresso (while the music was playing).

Where the gerund is in the perfect form, however, one may distinguish the progressive from the perfect through the presence or absence of *-ing* on the verb in the complement:

She remembers having been listening to a Grieg concerto (all evening).¹¹

She remembers having listened to a Grieg concerto (at least once in her life).

Once again, actual use may blur the distinction here, just as the distinction between *I have lived here for ten years* and *I have been living here for ten years* lies more in what is implied than what is necessarily expressed by the forms themselves.

It may be said with certainty that if tense and aspect in English is difficult for ESL/EFL students to master in simple clauses, the juxtaposition of tense and aspect in complement clauses is even more difficult to accomplish if nativelike performance is the objective. And, as we have seen, even native speakers exhibit considerable variation in their own production in this area, often rephrasing something that has already been said to make a relationship more precise. We therefore recommend focusing on these relationships in complement clauses only when learners have attained advanced proficiency.

ORDINARY INFINITIVES VERSUS PURPOSE INFINITIVES

In our discussion of various infinitive clauses, we have not yet mentioned one additional type of infinitive. This type is not regularly associated with any main-clause verb and hence is not a complement infinitive; it is called the *purpose infinitive*, illustrated in the following sentences:

They covered the porch to shield out the sun.

This drill bit is used to drill holes in metal.

It is easy to distinguish purpose infinitives from other infinitives by attempting to substitute *in order to* (or *so as to*) for *to*. If the substitution results in a good paraphrase, the form is a purpose infinitive. We can also try to move the infinitive to first position in the sentence and see if an acceptable sentence results:

We used a wrench to fix the sink. → To fix the sink, we used a wrench.

We hope to take our vacation soon. → *To take our vacation soon, we hope.

Purpose infinitives, which are adverbial constructions, may be readily moved, while ordinary infinitive complements may not.

One of the most confusing alternations for learners concerns the verb *stop*, which takes a gerund complement in one context (a) but also often appears with a purpose infinitive(b). Note the difference in meaning:

a. The man should stop drinking. (His drinking should cease.)

b. The man should stop to drink. (He should stop

| |
|---------|
| walking |
| driving |
| etc. |

 to drink some water.)

We have said that gerund complements are not well represented in the world's languages, while infinitive complements are common. This fact undoubtedly contributes to the frequency of errors where the (b) sentence pattern is used when the meaning requires the (a) pattern. Teachers should expect frequent errors of this type and perhaps address them directly during class time.

THE BARE-INFINITIVE COMPLEMENT VERSUS THE SUBJECT-PARTICIPLE CONSTRUCTION

There is considerable overlap in the class of verbs that take bare-infinitive complements and those that take subject-participle complements. The overlap is illustrated in the following italicized forms:

Verbs taking bare infinitives: *feel, have, hear, help, let, make, see, watch*

Verbs taking subject + participle: *dislike, enjoy, feel, hate, have, hear, like, love, observe, prefer, recall, remember, see, watch*

Most of the overlap concerns sensory perception verbs. Kirsner and Thompson (1976) present an analysis of the difference between the following pairs:

1a. I saw him break the branch.

1b. I saw him breaking the branch.

2a. They heard the door close.

2b. They heard the door closing.

3a. They watched the boat disappear over the horizon.

3b. They watched the boat disappearing over the horizon.

Kirsner and Thompson (1976) propose that the bare infinitive (i.e., the a. form) marks an event seen as punctual, limited, and bounded or perfective; in contrast, the subject-participle (i.e., the b. form) marks an imperfective event that is represented as durative, ongoing, or iterative, without focus on its beginning or end. This account explains why a main verb in the simple present tense occurs freely with an *-ing* form but is much less acceptable with a bare infinitive:

Look! I see him leaving the building.

?Look! I see him leave the building.

Since the simple present is not normally used to mark discrete, punctual events (but instead marks states, ongoing actions, or repeated actions), it makes sense that this tense would not take a bare infinitive. The account also explains why a perception verb like *observe* can appear with a subject-participle complement but not a bare-infinitive complement, even in the simple past tense. Part of the inherent meaning of *observing* involves the visual perception of something over an extended period of time without focusing on the event as a completed whole; one observes an action in progress. We can observe the painting of a picture as it progresses, but we would not normally speak of "observing" a sudden, momentary event, such as the switching on of a light. Thus, we are likely to hear sentences like:

We observed them eating dinner at Spago.

but are unlikely to hear ones like:

?We observed them sit down.

Likewise, the capacity for independent action on the part of the subject was also noted by Kirsner and Thompson (1976) to account for pairs such as these:

I saw the sunglasses { lying } by the side of the road.
{ *lie }

Since “sunglasses” cannot act independently, the bare infinitive is not possible.

We can also extend Kirsner and Thompson’s (1976) proposal to a nonperception verb, the causative verb *have*:

The boss had me turn off the light (a moment ago).

?The boss had me turning off the light (a moment ago).

The boss had me turning off the light (as part of my daily routine).

The second sentence, in order to be fully acceptable, would have to mean that the speaker’s task—in itself a momentary, punctual event—was repeated over an unspecified period of time, as in the more normal-sounding third sentence.

POSSESSIVE GERUND VERSUS SUBJECT-PARTICIPLE COMPLEMENTS

For some speakers of English, there is a subtle contrast for verbs taking both the possessive gerund complement and the subject-participle construction:

I appreciate his taking care of the dog.

I appreciate him taking care of the dog.

Such speakers report a greater focus on the entire event in the possessive gerund complement and a greater focus on the agent NP in the subject-participle construction. It should be noted that Biber et al. (1999) point out that in their extensive corpora, the simpler subject-participle construction is used much more frequently with these verbs than the possessive-gerund alternative (p. 750). Whether the frequency difference is due to the contrast between the two or to speakers opting for a simpler form is unclear.

CAUSATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

We have already spoken of *causative* constructions as those that depict one agent successfully causing another agent to perform an action. Some verbs which enter into these constructions (*cause, force, get*) fall syntactically into the infinitive complements pattern for *advise*-type verbs. Others (*make, have*) take bare-infinitive complements. In both cases, the object of the main clause is the understood subject of the complement. How do they differ in meaning? Here, we will address *have, get*, and *make*, drawing on the work of Martin (1981).

Have. The verb *have* suggests a routine hiring or selecting in which a relation of authority is implied, as between customer-businessperson or creditor-debtor:

We had Ray mow the lawn. (He does it every week.)

I had the barber trim my hair. (It is his profession.)

Fred had John give him back five dollars. (part of a debt that John owed Fred)

?He had a stranger on the street give him directions.

The last example appears inappropriate since it suggests a relation of authority that does not exist between two strangers in a chance meeting. The action performed must also relate to the specific *area* of authority.

Get. The verb *get* is often used to convey the sense that some difficulty was involved; perhaps the subject of the main clause used persuasion or coercion on the subject of the embedded clause:

I got Ray to give me five dollars. (He had refused earlier.)

Make. The verb *make* suggests that the subject of the main clause has coercive *power* (though not necessarily *authority* in any conventional sense) over the subject of the infinitive:

He made a stranger on the street give him five dollars. (Threat was involved.)

Have and *get*, but not *make*, may also take complements in which these meanings carry over well:

I finally had the lawn mowed.

I finally got the lawn mowed.

***I finally made the lawn mowed.**

However, the *get*-sentence is now ambiguous as to whether the lawn was mowed by the speaker or by someone else who was persuaded or forced to do so by the speaker.

Martin's (1981) usage analysis of causative constructions provides support for the distinctions made in this section. In his native-speaker questionnaire, 20 of 23 respondents chose *get* in cases where it was clear that some difficulty was involved:

I had a lot of trouble finding someone to do it, but I finally

a. had the lawn mowed. (= 3)

b. got the lawn mowed. (= 20)

He also found speakers favoring *get* for some fairly routine activities such as "cashing a check," when they may have involved some unexpected difficulties. (e.g., *I finally got the check cashed.*)

The Use of Complements and Related Forms

THE PRESENCE VERSUS ABSENCE OF *THAT*

A question that ESL/EFL teachers will hear asked again and again by students concerns the environments where *that* is or is not required in *that*-complement clauses.¹² We can answer this partially in syntactic terms and partially in terms of discourse conditions. Bolinger (1972) suggests that one determining factor is the relative formality of the discourse: the more formal the register, the more likely it is for *that* to be expressed. This is supported by Biber (1998), who reported findings from corpus data showing that *that* is omitted most frequently in conversation and least frequently in academic prose, with deletion rates in fiction and news reports falling between the two extremes.

Another factor that Bolinger (1972) mentioned concerns specific verbs: the greater the relative frequency of the main verb in discourse, the more likely it is that the *that*-complementizer will be absent:

He said he wasn't interested.

He told us he wasn't interested.

?He snarled he wasn't interested.

While *say* and *tell* are very frequent reporting verbs, *snarl* is not and would seem to strongly prefer the retention of *that*. This is also supported by Biber et al. (1999).

A third factor that Bolinger (1972) observed is the presence of intervening material between the verb and the complement; this tends to increase the likelihood of *that* being present, another observation that Biber et al. (1999) support (p. 682):

He said he wasn't interested.

?He said in a recent report he wasn't interested.

??He said in a report released yesterday by UPI he wasn't interested.

In the second and third case here, the occurrence of *that* before *he wasn't interested* would resolve any processing problems and thus would be preferred.

Biber et al. (1999) further state that the use of coordinated *that*-clauses favors the retention of *that*:

Professor Johnson agreed that our observations were accurate and that we should try to publish our findings.

They also report that in their corpora the use of passive voice in the main clause favored the retention of *that*:

The political leaders were convinced that elections would take place as planned.

Other than verb frequency, informality of register, and the above mentioned syntactic factors, are there any other contextual factors that favor the deletion of *that*? In fact, there are some additional factors that Biber et al. (1999) have identified. One is having the same subject in the main clause and the *that*-clause, and another is having a pronoun as the subject of the *that*-clause. Consider the following example:

I think I'll buy a new computer.

In this sentence, four factors (verb frequency, informality, same subject in the main clause and the complement clause, and a pronoun subject in the complement clause) all conspire to favor the deletion of *that*.

Finally, Biber (1998) reports that the most frequent verbs controlling *that*-complements in both conversation and news reports are *think, say, know, see, believe, show, find, and feel*. These are verbs of cognition, perception, and speech often related to the speaker's or writer's stance. Such corpus-based information can be of great use to language teachers because it indicates the verbs to emphasize when initially introducing *that*-complements to learners, as well as the verbs most likely to favor *that* deletion.

COMPLEMENT-TAKING PREDICATES IN CONVERSATION

According to Thompson (2002), the description of complementation that we have given so far does not apply to conversation. Working with a corpus of conversational English, she argues that viewing what we have called "complement clauses" as subordinate (or embedded) does not work for spoken data. What we have called "subject NP + main verb" (e.g., *I think...*) are what she calls "complement-taking predicates (CTPs)" in conversation, formulaic fragments that express stance toward the content of a following complement. Some of the most frequent "predicates" occurring in the CTPs in her data (p. 129) are *think* (by far the most frequent), *realize, decide, figure, be possible, be too bad, be afraid, can tell, doesn't matter, hope, wish, and be sure*. The subjects of these predicates are typically pronouns (e.g., *I, you, they, everybody*). Using data like the following, Thompson analyzes "I think" as a CTP followed by the juxtaposed complement "it's cool"; for Thompson, the CTP does the same work as a modal auxiliary or a sentential adverb expressing an epistemic, or evidential, stance (p. 132). Further, the complement is the main carrier of information, while the CTP simply marks stance:

Terry: I think it's cool.

Abbie: It is cool.

Maureen: It is great.

All but a few instances in Thompson's (2002) conversational data (i.e., 425 tensed complements preceded by CTPs) were amenable to Thompson's functional analysis. If Thompson's analysis is correct, it gives credence to McCarthy and O'Keeffe's (2014) claim, which is that informal spoken English is structurally different in many ways from formal written grammar.¹³

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have presented what we believe to be the best possible analyses of most of the English clausal complement types controlled by verbs, especially in written discourse. In the following chapters, we will carry the discussion further. It should be clear by now that much of what is required of a learner in mastering complementation is similar to what is involved in learning noun gender in most Indo-European languages or noun classes in Chinese or Bantu languages: a certain amount of feel for the logic of semantic regularities and a certain amount of exposure. It would be unrealistic for an ESL/EFL teacher to expect students to master all of the verb-complement pairs that exist in English in the course of a term, but with systematic teacher attention, over time, students can be brought to the point where they are conscious of the many options before them.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** Students who want to learn the information in this chapter simply through a form of rote memorization should be advised that the most effective way to do this is probably *not* to make lists of which verbs take which complements and then to memorize the lists. Rather, a more effective self-study method would be for students to make up their own [verb + complement] sentences on a verb-class-by-verb-class basis and—after verifying the grammaticality and idiomaticity of these sentences—to reread or, better, recite their sentences orally at home, attending to their meaning.
2. **Form.** At lower class levels, and for review at higher class levels, a useful teaching technique that will cue students to proper forms and give them practice in using verbs meaningfully is for the teacher to model questions that incorporate the complement type in the question itself, and then for the students to practice these forms with verb + verb forms. What follows is an outline of four lesson plans in the spirit of suggestions made by Rosenzweig (1973).

Lesson 1. Attempt-type infinitives (*attempt, tend, fail, proceed, manage, refuse, promise, offer, decide, try*)

The teacher asks questions that elicit model sentences, such as:

Teacher: What will you try to do this weekend?

Student: I will try to finish my term paper.

Teacher: Where have you decided to go on your vacation next year?

Student: I have decided to go to Mallorca.

The teacher then prompts students to generate sentences based on pairs of verbs provided by the teacher, such as *refuse/accept*:

Student: I refuse to accept your offer.

Students can then work in small groups with pairings such as *manage/finish, fail/do, offer/help, refuse/eat*, and so on.

Lesson 2. Want-type infinitives (*want, intend, expect, prefer, hate, like, love, hope, desire, love*)

The *want*-class of verbs, which may or may not have noun phrases or *for* prepositional phrases as nonidentical complement subjects, make a good focus for students interviewing other students. Most of these verbs give students ample opportunity to express their feelings on topics that concern them directly. The teacher may begin with:

What do you hate/love most to do?

What do you hate/love most for someone else to do?

An exercise follows based on pairs provided, such as *intend/study*:

Teacher: What do you intend to study?

Student: I intend to study engineering.

Teacher: What does your family intend (for) you to study?

Student: My family intends (for) me to study engineering, too.

Student-to-student questioning follows with additional pairs: *prefer/eat*, *hope/spend the coming vacation*, and so on, adding noun phrases or *for* prepositional phrases where reasonable, as discussed previously.

Lesson 3. Verbs taking only gerund objects (*stop, quit, recall, dislike, enjoy, avoid, admit, deny, defend*)

The lesson continues to follow essentially the same pattern as discussed previously.

Lesson 4. Verbs taking both gerunds and infinitives (*forget, remember, try, like, start, begin, continue, love*)

At this stage, the teacher may find it useful to present Bolinger's (1968) principle distinguishing gerunds from infinitives, supplying verbs where the distinction is most clearly exhibited:

Teacher: What do you remember doing yesterday?

What did you remember to do yesterday?

With each student answer, the teacher should make sure to confirm that the student intended to convey that he or she actually did or did not do the activity. The lesson then continues to follow the same pattern as before, but with student questioners cued to elicit alternating pairs, such as *forget* + gerund, *forget* + infinitive, *would like* + infinitive, *like* + gerund or infinitive, and so on.

Lesson 5. Encourage integration and transfer of rules learned in the preceding lessons.

At this point, teachers should mix different types of [verb + complement] pairs and either continue an activity like the ones above or have students write compositions or carry out role-plays in which various [verb-verb] pairs suggested by the teacher are used.

- 3. Form.** Frodesen and Eyring (2007) suggest that students role-play the solving of a problem to practice the use of subjunctive *that*-clauses. Two or more students take opposite sides of an issue. For example:

A young woman would like to attend an all-male college. The president of the college wants to maintain the 100-year tradition of an all-male campus. Students then use the following frames to make their arguments:

I propose that...

I suggest that...

We recommend that...

- 4. Meaning.** For verbs that take both infinitives and gerunds, but with a difference in meaning, B. Gaskill (personal communication) has suggested that explicit time sequences be used to teach the differences between infinitives and gerunds with main verbs such as *remember* and *forget*. The teacher introduces these verbs along with a number of situations that can appropriately serve as complements:

call my parents

tell you the news

lock the door

do my homework

Then the notion of time sequence is introduced and an example provided to show that if the action in the main verb *precedes* the action in the complement, the infinitive is used:

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>This happened earlier</i> | <i>This happened later</i> |
| I remembered. | I called my parents |
| (main clause) | (complement clause) |

→ I remembered to call my parents.

The teacher must also show the reverse. That is, if the action in the main clause *follows* the action in the complement, the gerund is used:

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>This happened earlier</i> | <i>This happened later</i> |
| I called my parents. | I remembered. |
| (complement) | (main clause) |

→ I remembered calling my parents.

After practicing a number of situations with *remember* using Gaskill's time frames, students then can generalize this activity to similar situations for the verb *forget*.

5. **Meaning.** The distinction in use between verbs that alternate between taking bare infinitives and [subject + participle] complements (*see, bear, watch, feel, have*) can be modeled to some extent in the classroom by the teacher or by other students. Someone can close the door slowly and incompletely while asking,

What do you see? (Answer: I see you closing the door.)

Someone can then close the door quickly and completely and ask,

What did you see? (Answer: I saw you close the door.)

Teachers can use their imaginations in coming up with ideas for other verbs. This sort of activity, incidentally, can be done in conjunction with a review contrasting the simple present/present progressive and simple past/past progressive in main clauses (*What am I doing? What did I do? What was I doing?* and so on).

6. **Form.** A good role-play situation for practicing the causative *have* is to role-play a beauty salon/barbershop scene. A role-play for three will include two customers and a stylist/barber. The stylist/barber will ask one customer, "What do you want to have done today?" The customer can then answer in a variety of ways using *have*: "I want to have my hair cut," "I want to have my sideburns trimmed," and so on. This customer can then ask the other customer what he or she wants to have done, and so on. It has even been suggested (by Jill Rosenheim and Sue Weingarten) that students actually visit a salon or barbershop as a type of field experience and make an inventory of services available at the business (i.e., the things that people can have done there).
7. **Use.** Find a news article containing many examples of *that*-complements with several clauses having the *that*-complementizer present and several others having it absent. Ask your students to work in groups and underline all the *that*-complements and circle all the *that*-complementizers. Ask them to come up with generalizations about why *that* appears before some of the complement clauses but not others. If they have difficulties, give them a list of the observations made by Bolinger (1972), Biber (1998), and Biber et al. (1999) so they can see if the observations apply to their texts.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Write sentences that illustrate the following terms:
 - a. complement
 - b. complementizer
 - c. tensed *that*-clause complement
 - d. subjunctive complement
 - e. infinitive complement
 - f. gerund complement
 - g. subject + participle construction
 - h. purpose infinitive
 - i. the Bolinger principle (for gerunds vs. infinitives)
2. Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences:
 - a. John thinks that Bob will buy a car.
 - b. We suggested that he turn on the radio.
3. Account for the ungrammaticality of the following sentences:
 - a. *I want that my brother will come home for New Year's.
 - b. *My friends insisted me to come with them.
 - c. *The teacher forced us drink hot chocolate.
 - d. *I understood for me to be the winner.
 - e. *They disagreed over to go to that movie.
4. Based on the various types of complement that we have outlined in the chapter, which category or categories of complement types would the following verbs appear with? Some may occur with more than one complement construction. Use your intuition (or consult a dictionary) about the use of the verbs in ordinary English sentences, together with your knowledge of the categories of verb complementation, and provide example sentences.

| | | |
|--------|------|---------|
| agree | beg | notice |
| argue | dare | resist |
| assist | keep | suspect |

Test your ability to apply what you know.

5. How would you teach ESL/EFL students to use infinitives and gerunds correctly with the verb *try*? Suggest a context and a teaching strategy.
6. In our discussion of *get*, we did not contrast this verb in the following two frames:

The teacher got the students to draw pictures.
The teacher got the students drawing pictures.

A student asks which of the two forms is correct. You say that both are correct, but how would you explain the difference between them?
7. Another student asks you to explain the difference between the two sentences below:

I expect to leave by 4:15.
I expect to have left by 4:15.

How would you respond to the question?
8. One ESL teacher said that he had his students memorize the verbs that take gerund complements and told them to use infinitives everywhere else. Do you think that this is a good teaching strategy? Why or why not?

9. Suppose that you are presented with the following sentences in a set of ESL compositions and wish to give explicit oral feedback on them. What would you tell the students?
- *The kindergarten teacher made them to lie down.
 - *She told us that where the restaurant was located.
 - *We will go overseas for visiting our parents.
 - *The officer demanded that I had to show him my license.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

A very clear treatment of complements in an older generative framework may be found in:

Akmajian, A., & Heny, F. (1975). *An introduction to the principles of transformational syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Traditional nongenerative treatments may be found in:

- Joos, M. (1964). *The English verb: Form and meaning*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Poutsma, H. (1923). *The infinitive, the gerund, and the participles of the English verb*. Groningen, Netherlands: Noordhoff.

For a good recent descriptive account of English complementation, see:

Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. (2006). *Cambridge grammar of English*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

For an extensive corpus-based description of English complementation, see:

Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman grammar of spoken and written English*. Harlow, Essex, England: Pearson Education Ltd.

For a fairly complete inventory of English verbs and their complement options, see:

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London, England: Longman.

For cross-linguistic treatments of complementation in a variety of languages other than English, see:

- Dixon, R. M. W., & Aikhenvald, A. Y. (Eds.). (2006). *Complementation: A cross-linguistic typology*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
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Most ESL/EFL grammar texts at the intermediate level and above cover infinitives, gerunds, and *that*-clauses. For many, however, the treatment of infinitives is usually a highly simplified one that does not carefully distinguish types in the way that we have done in this chapter. Two of the better recent treatments at the high intermediate level are:

- Thewlis, S. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 3* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Houck, N., & Hilles, S. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 4*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Two treatments at the advanced level are in:

- Cake, C. D. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 5*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Frodesen, J., & Eyring, J. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 4* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

An interesting series of lessons on infinitives and gerunds from initial presentation to high intermediate level are in the following texts:

- Blass, L., Iannuzzi, S., & Savage, A. (with Reppen, R.). (2012). *Grammar and beyond 3*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Reppen, R. (with Gordon, D.). (2012). *Grammar and beyond 1*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Reppen, R. (with Gordon, D.). (2012). *Grammar and beyond 2*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Endnotes

1. In his corpus-based study of non-finite complementation in English, Egan (2008) identifies one additional complementation pattern that is rare but possible (*to -ing*) (p. 320):

Lind later admitted openly to being an official of the shipping federation . . .

Such tokens occurred with only a few of the more than 300 matrix verbs Egan included in his study. Since it is not clear that *to* is an infinitive marker here and not a preposition taking a gerund complement as its object, we shall not deal with this pattern in our treatment of complementation other than to note that prepositions, like verbs, may take gerund clause complements. We would thus expect prepositions other than *to* to take gerund complements. In fact, such sentences occur:

Susan complained about allowing the men to stay in the office.

The supervisor told us to dispense with editing the new material.

2. Clausal *that*-complements differ from ordinary NPs in that they cannot appear after prepositions as prepositional objects:

Scientists are often surprised by [great discoveries].

***Scientists are disturbed by [that the earth is getting warmer].**

However, if the *that*-clause appears at the beginning of the sentence and the preposition is stranded (i.e. left at the end of its clause with no object following), this restriction does not hold:

[That the earth is getting warmer] is something scientists are disturbed by.

3. We choose to expand *S* as (*comp*) (*sm*ⁿ) *S* because we would want to be able to account for sentences like the following:

She said that, unfortunately, she could not make the appointment.

4. In some generative grammars, infinitives occurring with main clause verbs like *believe*, *know*, and *report* are called “exceptional clauses” partly because of this chameleonlike property of “subjects looking like objects,” and also because their structural analysis differs from that of other infinitive types.
5. The verb *attempt*, of course, can be used in other contexts in which it takes a normal NP object, such as *She attempted a quick exit from the building*. In that case, the *what*-question would be appropriate. Most linguists would say that in the lexicon, the verb *attempt* is listed with two possible syntactic frames: one in which the verb takes a nonclausal NP object, and another in which it takes an infinitival complement.
6. Some speakers find it odd to say *She promised me to fix the problem*; others do not. Those who reject this construction find an acceptable paraphrase in *She promised me that she would fix the problem*.
7. When *help* occurs without *to*, it follows the bare-stem infinitive pattern; however, when *help* occurs with *to*, it follows the *advise*-type infinitive complement pattern.
8. Duffley (1992) is a book-length treatment of the “verb + *to*” versus “verb + \emptyset ” alternation, which offers accounts of other such parallel forms not discussed here.
9. Note that some of these verbs occur in other environments in which they do not convey this subjunctive sense. *Insist* may mean “strongly assert,” as in *She insisted that the Indians won the World Series in 1949*; in this case, the embedded verb is in past tense. *Ask* may mean “inquire,” in which case it takes a tensed *whether/if*-complement, discussed in Chapter 33. In addition, many of these verbs (*ask*, *require*) may also take infinitival complements, which are by nature tenseless; finally, some verbs with similar meanings take only infinitival complements (*command*).
10. Recall that the *-ing* of the gerund (which formally marks a nominal form) is not the same as the *-ing* of the progressive (which marks an ongoing activity).
11. Many speakers would simplify such a sentence to:
She remembers listening to a Grieg concerto (all evening).
12. This problem arises with the relative pronoun *that* as well; see Chapters 28 and 29 for discussion.
13. See also Van Bogaert (2010) for further discussion of *I think* and related complement-taking mental predicates from a cognitive grammar perspective.

Other Aspects of Complementation

CHAPTER

32

Introduction

In this chapter, we continue the discussion of issues related to complementation begun in Chapter 31. We also look at some constructions where *that*-clauses and infinitive complements function in ways other than as complements to verbs. Then we return to a discussion of passive voice, examining how it interacts with complementation. In addition, we introduce two more semantic distinctions among verbs and adjectives that take complement clauses (namely, factive versus nonfactive predicates and implicative verbs). Finally, we present some relevant corpus-based studies concerning use.

The six new constructions we discuss in this chapter are:

1. Subject-to-subject raising—The subject of the complement becomes the subject of the main clause:

It seems [that they have succeeded].

They seem [to have succeeded].

2. Complex-NP complements—The *that*-clause or infinitive functions as a complement to an NP:

The news [that a hurricane is coming] is worrisome.

A good time [to open a bottle of champagne] will be your birthday.

3. Adjective complements—Adjectives, like verbs and nouns, can also take *that*-complements or infinitive complements:

I'm glad [that you passed the examination].

Joan is eager [to see you].

4. Extraposition of complements—The tendency of heavy or dominant constituents to be placed at the end of the sentence with the subject slot being filled by nonreferential *it* (sometimes called “anticipatory” or “extraposed *it*”):

[That he left without any money] is unfortunate.

It is unfortunate [that he left without any money].

5. Object-to-subject raising—The object of the complement becomes the subject of the main clause:

It is important [to solve the problem].

The problem is important [to solve].

6. Complex passives—The main clause, the complement clause, or both are in the passive voice, thus making different word orders and structures possible:

[That Joe will win the award] is expected.
It is expected [that the award will be won by Joe].
Joe is expected to win the award.

These six constructions provide English speakers/writers with a variety of ways to express their intentions, to bring to prominence what they wish to focus on, and to facilitate processing for listeners and readers.

LEARNING CHALLENGES WITH COMPLEX COMPLEMENT CLAUSES

As with other instances in which nonreferential *it* plays a mainly structural role in English sentences to fulfill the requirement that a surface subject be expressed, ESL/EFL teachers may find their students omitting the *it* in sentences with *seem* and similar verbs. This is because other languages may exhibit no such requirement, permitting equivalents of sentences like these to occur, which are used by English speakers in colloquial speech but not in formal registers:

Seems (that) John is sick today.
Looks like we won't be able to go to the movies.

Learners will also produce sentences like the following, which mix the possible syntactic constructions for predicates with, for example, *seem* and *be certain*:

***He seems like to be not very honest.** (It seems like he is not very honest.)
***I am certain for the assignment to be very easy.** (I am certain that the assignment will be very easy.)

A teacher faced with sentences like the starred ones here should be aware of the range of options available in English complementation and the confusion that ESL/EFL learners may experience in trying to select among them.

Another issue for English learners is that not all languages have the raising-to-subject constructions that occur in English. Most languages have the structural equivalent of

(It) seems that John is happy.

but there are languages that have no construction, like the following, where the subject of the complement becomes the subject of the main clause:

John seems to be happy.

Likewise, most languages have sentences equivalent to

(It) is easy to please Mary.

However, there are many languages that have no construction, like the following, where the object of the complement is the subject of the main clause:

Mary is easy to please.

Chan (2010), following Yip's (1995) observations about cross-linguistic influence from Cantonese to English, found that Cantonese-speaking students from Hong Kong wrote sentences such as the following, which shows that deciding which NPs to raise or not raise is a problem:

***Up to now, we are not easy to work together.**

Chan reports that equivalent sentences with infinitive complements like these are common and acceptable in Cantonese.

M. Shintani (personal communication) tells us that such raised subject constructions are also challenging for Japanese speakers to comprehend and produce because such constructions do not occur in Japanese. This is true for speakers of other languages, and ESL/EFL teachers need to be aware of the special challenges facing these learners. We now discuss one of these raised subject constructions in some detail.

The Form of Complex Complement Constructions

SUBJECT-TO-SUBJECT RAISING

In Chapter 31, we discussed verb classes that are associated with certain complement types. One additional type of verb that takes an obligatory complement are certain copular verbs, exemplified here by the verb *seem*. This verb commonly appears in three frames:

The offer seems good.

They seem to have succeeded.

It seems that they have succeeded.

In the first case, we have a sentence that we can already describe with the phrase structure rule for VP, one of whose possible expansions is [cop + AP]. The other sentences cannot be so easily accounted for. Such sentences are characterized by *subject-to-subject raising*, which is the subject of the embedded sentence moving up to the main-clause subject position, leaving behind an empty subject slot in the infinitive:

[] seem [they to have succeeded] → *raising* → **They seem [<sub>> to have succeeded].**

Wherever the verb *seem* is used with a following infinitive, the infinitive has as its logical subject the subject of the main clause. For example, we cannot have the following:

***They seem their friend to have succeeded.¹**

The assumption among many grammarians has been that the subject of the main clause in these sentences is an empty slot, and because almost every sentence in English must have an overt subject, the subject of the infinitive fills the subject slot in the main clause.

What, then, of the third type of sentence?

It seems that they have succeeded.

We cannot have subject-raising here, since the result would be ungrammatical:²

***They seems that [] have succeeded.**

We may simply assume, then, that the *that*-clause in this case is a complement after the verb and that the nonreferential subject, anticipatory *it*, occupies initial position to fulfill the requirement for a subject. Other verbs that follow the pattern of *seem* in all relevant respects include *turn out*, *happen*, and *appear*:

It turned out that John got the promotion.

John turned out to get the promotion.

It happens/appears that you are right.

You happen/appear to be right.

Three other verblike constructions that are similar but not completely parallel are *seem like*, *sound like*, and *look like*:

It seems like (*that) something is wrong.

Something seems like it's wrong.

It sounds like (*that) you don't agree.

You sound like you don't agree.

In these examples, the unacceptability of the complementizer *that* is probably related to the fact that these verbs involve a verb + prepositional construction (i.e., *look + like*). As we have already noted in Chapter 31, a tensed *that*-clause cannot be the object of a preposition.³

Raising is also sometimes held to operate in the case of certain adjective constructions, such as *be (un)likely* and *be certain*.⁴ We get the same structural alternations as with verbs like *seem*, and the same patterns of ungrammaticality:

It is (un)likely/certain that we will be able to return the merchandise.

***We are (un)likely/certain that will be able to return the merchandise.**

We are (un)likely/certain to be able to return the merchandise.

The last of these sentences is the same as the *seem* + infinitive, where the subject NP in the embedded clause moves to the subject position in the main clause.

Up to now, all the clausal complements we have presented have been verb complements. However, these are not the only types of complements: both nouns and adjectives may take complements in English.

COMPLEX-NP COMPLEMENTS

We have seen many cases in Chapter 31 of *that*-clauses that function as complement objects of main verbs. *That*-clauses often function as complements of NPs as well, especially in conjunction with certain NPs that represent a cognitive stance or indicate the presumed truth value of the proposition expressed in the complement clause. Such NPs are often called *complex* NPs when they take complements. Some example sentences include those here, with the head noun in italics:

The *belief* [that financial reserves are infinite] is misguided.

I don't agree with the *notion* [that there is no future in electric cars].

Do you believe the *claim* [that Sam is really a bigamist]?

Her interest in Monet lies in the *fact* [that he was a French impressionist].

In some cases, head nouns also take infinitive complements, but these are much less frequent than *that*-complements:

I had a *chance* [to play Scrabble with George].

This is a good *occasion* [to celebrate].

In conversation, only the noun *chance* occurs with infinitive complements in complex NPs with any frequency (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999, p. 653).

Each complex NP includes a simple NP plus a complement clause. Note that although the *that*-clause examples look similar to relative clauses, they are grammatically distinct from them. For instance, the *that* at the beginning of the complement clause cannot be identified with any NP in the clause (as can the word *that* in a relative clause, like *Mary saw the coat [that she wanted to buy [Ø]]*, where *that* is moved forward from the object position and is identical to *coat*). One of the best ways to make learners aware of the contrast between relative clauses with *that* as the relative pronoun and complex NP *that*-complements is to use examples with the same head noun. Biber et al. (1999) state that the head nouns *hope*, *doubt*, and *suggestion* occur with both constructions in news reports and the head nouns *possibility*, *doubt*, *belief*, and *assumption* occur with both constructions in academic writing (p. 650):

NP Comp: **The *suggestion* that the governor should resign is premature.**

Rel. Cl.: **The *suggestion* that the governor made is premature.**

NP Comp: **I *question* the *assumption* that two case studies are enough.**

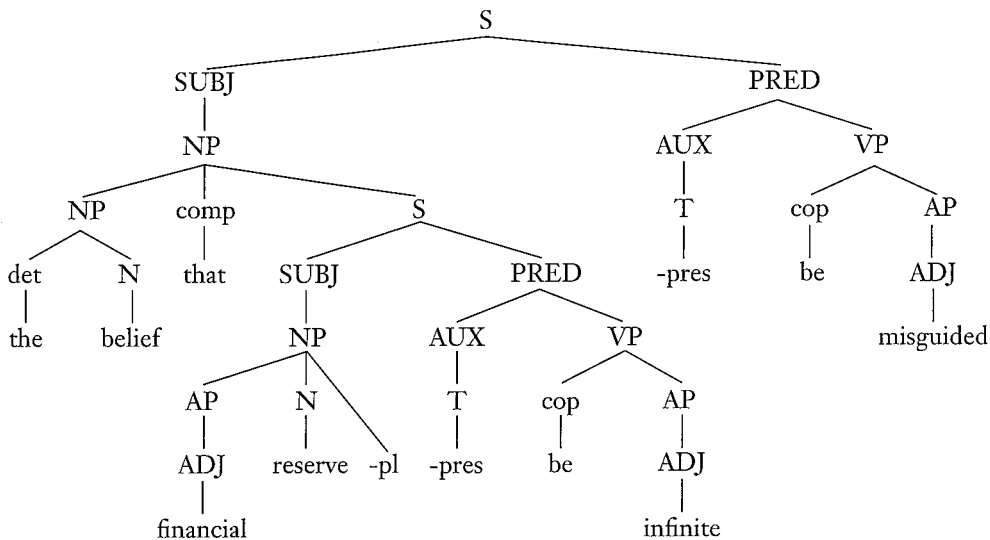
Rel. Cl.: **I *question* the *assumption* that they make in their research design.**

Our phrase structure rule for NP must be expanded once again to account for complex NP complements:

NP → NP comp S

The tree structure will be the following:

The belief that financial reserves are infinite is misguided.



Some types of noun complement with the phrase *the fact*, where *the fact* is a prepositional object, have become part of complex prepositional-phrase lexical bundles which, when spoken, may be uttered so quickly that they seem like single words:

I didn't understand what he said *due to the fact that* he was facing the other way.

She was angry *on account of the fact that* he hadn't called her back.

They left town *in spite of the fact that* they loved the place.

The formulaic nature of these lexical bundles with *the fact that* may partially be accounted for by the inability of a full *that*-clause to appear as the object of a preposition and the need for a grammatical means to serve the same function—a need that is fulfilled by NPs like *the fact*. Teachers will probably see sentences like the following produced by ESL/EFL students who are unaware of this restriction:

***My friend drove me home in my car because of I was too tired to drive.**

***The principal scolded me in spite of I hadn't done anything wrong.**

It is, therefore, worthwhile for a teacher to make students aware of expressions involving *the fact* and to provide them with examples in use, especially in written prose.⁵

Many of the nouns occurring as heads of noun complements are derived from or related to verbs (e.g., *suggest*) or adjectives (e.g., *possible*); *fact* and *idea* are the exceptions and are the only nouns taking *that*-complements in conversation with any frequency (Biber et al., 1999). Nouns of cognition occurring commonly as heads of *that*-complements include *assumption*, *belief*, *claim*, *conclusion*, *decision*, *impression*, *reason*, *suggestion*, *thought*, and *view*:

The assumption that the war had ended two years ago was false.

Their belief that war was inevitable led to great destruction.

The nouns occurring most frequently as heads of infinitive complements include *ability*, *attempt*, *capacity*, *chance*, *decision*, *effort*, *failure*, *opportunity*, *plan*, and *power*:

Their ability to negotiate a truce was an asset.

Most people agreed with the decision to withdraw troops.

When NPs of urging or recommending take *that*-clause complements, the verbs in their complements will appear in the subjunctive, just as they do for verbs of urging or recommendation taking subjunctive clauses:

Ordinary subjunctive verb complements:

We recommended that he *take* an early plane.

The government demanded that truck drivers *be* specially tested.

Sentences with complex NP subjunctive complements:

The recommendation that he *take* an early plane was a wise one.

The government's demand that truck drivers *be* specially tested was excessive.

ADJECTIVE COMPLEMENTS

As we mentioned, adjectives, like verbs and nouns, may also take clausal complements; they may be infinitival, they may be tensed *that*-clauses, or they may be subjunctive *that*-clauses, depending on the adjective:

Lorena is eager [to know your birthday].

She was fascinated [to learn the truth].

We're happy [that you could be here with us tonight].

The students are disappointed [that their team lost].

It is imperative [that she leave on time].

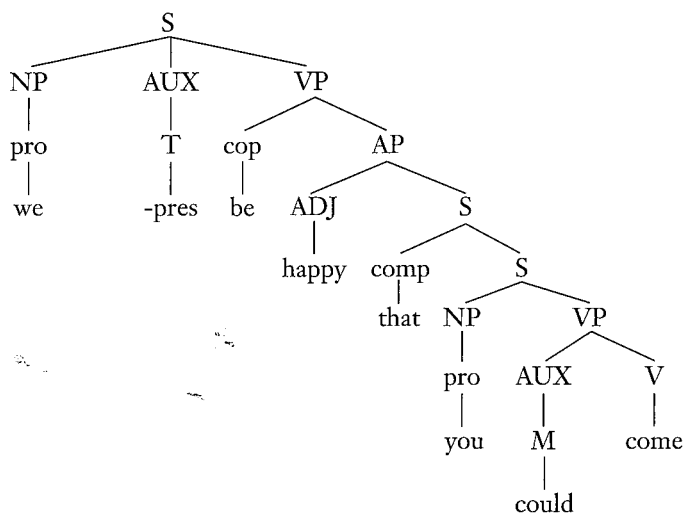
[That he complete his required courses first] is essential.

Such clauses can be said to branch from the AP node and will require a revision of the AP phrase structure rule to read:

$$AP \rightarrow (ADV^n) ADJ (\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{PrepP} \\ S \end{array} \right\})$$

We apply our earlier rule, whereby $S \rightarrow \text{comp } S$, and the resulting tree structure for the sentence *We are happy that you could come* is:

We are happy that you could come.



Other adjectives that can take *that*-complements are *apparent*, *clear*, and *implicit*. Other adjectives that can take subjunctive *that*-complements are *vital*, *(un)necessary*, and *urgent*. The largest class, other adjectives that can take infinitive complements, includes *anxious*, *(un)willing*,

inclined, and *ready*. As expected, there are adjectives that can take both *that*-complements and infinitive complements: *overjoyed*, *disappointed*, *happy*, and *glad*, among others. This causes the occasional confusion of which type of complement—*that*-clause, infinitive, or either type—goes with which adjective:

***I am anxious that I see you. (I am anxious to see you.)**

EXTRAPOSITION OF COMPLEMENTS

There are instances other than *seem*-type sentences where *it* appears in subject position and a *that*-clause follows the main verb. However, they are distinctly different in that in these cases, the embedded clause could replace the *it* in subject position and yield an acceptable paraphrase. For instance, we cannot have sentences like

***That John is happy seems.**

With other verbs, the situation is different. Consider the following related pairs:

[That he left without any money] is unfortunate.

It's unfortunate [that he left without any money].

[That he spent all day playing video games] didn't help his grades.

It didn't help his grades [that he spent all day playing video games].

[That someone would say that] indicates a complete lack of understanding.

It indicates a complete lack of understanding [that someone would say that].

In these sentences, the *that*-clause complements are moved to the end of the sentence. Subsequently, there is no subject, and nonreferential *it* fulfills this purpose. Note that when *that*-clauses are placed at the beginning of the sentence, we cannot omit the complementizer *that* under any circumstances:

***He left without any money is unfortunate.**

(That he left without any money is unfortunate.)

However, extraposed *that*-clauses may sometimes omit the complementizer, probably for some of the same reasons we noted concerning *that*-deletion in Chapter 31:

It's unfortunate he left without any money.

We see the same kind of alternative forms with infinitives, as well as the free relatives discussed in Chapter 29:

Infinitives:

[For her to quit like that] was scandalous.

It was scandalous [for her to quit like that].

[To do that] would take more time than I have right now.

It would take more time than I have right now [to do that].

Free relatives:

[Who did that] is unknown.

It is unknown [who did that].

[Where we're going] is a mystery to me.

It's a mystery to me [where we're going].

Gerunds are less amenable to extraposition than *that*-clauses or infinitives; they do not extrapose well with possessive subjects, although they do sometimes occur in conversation as afterthoughts, especially in cases without possessive subjects:

[Her whistling old songs] woke up the neighborhood.

***It woke up the neighborhood [her whistling old songs].**

[Spending the afternoon with you] is nice.
It's nice [spending the afternoon with you].
[Living without a car in this city] is not easy.
It's not easy [living without a car in this city].
[Watching the election results] made me angry.
It made me angry [watching the election results].

Extraposition, in these cases, shifts the entire subject clause⁶ to the end of the sentence, where complements tend to occur.

The same sort of movement seems to be taking place in sentences such as the following, where extraposition occurs from an object position. In these cases, the first alternative is clearly interpretable but may be awkward:

?I doubt [that she has the answer] very much.
I doubt (it) very much [that she has the answer].
?We appreciate [that you had the time to help us] greatly.
We appreciate (it) greatly [that you had the time to help us].

Note: the optional *it* in parentheses is a pronominal reflex for the extraposed *that*-clause.

We want [to go back to our dormitory] very much.
We want very much [to go back to our dormitory].

Extraposition has been claimed to operate elsewhere as well. Sometimes just one part of a subject, such as a relative clause, a complement, or a participial phrase may detach and move to sentence-final position; such movement in structures other than complements is most common in colloquial usage but is not considered good formal written style:

Extraposed *that*-complement:

The fact [that you have won the lottery] is irrelevant. →
The fact is irrelevant [that you have won the lottery].

Extraposed relative clauses:

The problem [that I told you about] has been diagnosed. →
The problem has been diagnosed [that I told you about].

Extraposed participial phrase:

Any questions [regarding the contract] must be dealt with immediately. →
Any questions must be dealt with immediately [regarding the contract].

Such movement is sometimes called *extraposition from NP*.⁷

OBJECT-TO-SUBJECT RAISING

A similar but distinct syntactic pattern, often called the *easy-to-please* construction,⁸ causes frequent difficulties for ESL/EFL students for reasons that we outline next.

The *easy-to-please* structure depends on the presence of certain adjectives denoting personal judgments about something: *easy, hard, challenging, difficult, annoying, important, (im)possible, safe, dangerous, nice, boring, interesting, and fun*:

It's easy to please my friend John. → My friend John is easy to please.
It's fun to play this game. → This game is fun to play.
It's impossible to solve the problem. → The problem is impossible to solve.
It's not safe to eat those mushrooms. → Those mushrooms are not safe to eat.

The alternation may occur in embedded structures as well, as in the following bare-infinitive complement:

The teacher made it easy to follow the lectures. → The teacher made the lectures easy to follow.

This construction may also appear with a *for*-phrase, similar to verbs like *prefer* (see Chapter 31). Where the *for*-phrase is present, the understood subject of the infinitive is the object of *for*:

It's easy for me to please my friend John.

The teacher made it easy for us to follow the lectures.

When there is no *for*-phrase, the understood subject of the infinitive complement in all these cases is normally understood to be a rather vague “anyone” or “someone.”

The construction is formed by raising the embedded object to serve as the main clause subject:

[] is impossible to solve the problem → [The problem] is impossible to solve []

The embedded clause originates as the complement to an adjective like *easy*, *difficult*, or (*im*)*possible*. If the object NP in the complement is raised, it is not necessary to add *it*: *The problem is impossible to solve*. However, if the object NP is not moved out of the infinitive to serve as the higher subject, nonreferential *it* fills the subject slot: *[It] is impossible to solve this problem*.⁹

While these movements are from direct object position, they may also occur from a prepositional object position when the verb phrase of the main clause includes a PrepP; for example:

It's fun to work on computers. → Computers are fun to work on.

It's hard to deal with this problem. → This problem is hard to deal with.

It's easy to talk about the topic. → The topic is easy to talk about.

In these cases, we are left with a stranded preposition. The prepositional object of the infinitive complement has moved up to the main-clause subject position (object to subject). However, for all infinitives like these, it is also possible to move the entire infinitive complement into initial position in the main clause. This is a marked stylistic option, compared with the two other possible surface forms discussed previously:

To work on computers is fun.

To deal with this problem is hard.

To talk about the topic is easy.

COMPLEX PASSIVES

At this point, it is useful to return to passive voice, a structure that was analyzed in Chapter 18, and to see how the structure and its uses intersect with the grammar of multiclausal sentences. As you recall from Chapter 18, a passive structure has a patient or recipient in the subject position of the sentence and places the agent of the sentence into a secondary position, appearing (if at all) in a *by*-phrase in the VP.

We will cover reported speech and writing in detail in the next chapter; however, it is worth mentioning here that passives frequently appear in reports where the agent—that is, the reporter—is of no particular interest (or cannot be divulged), and the report, or message, is the focus. Rather than saying *People believe that . . .* with a clause following, it is more common to see sentences like these here:

It is believed that weather patterns are changing worldwide.

It is not known for certain who Homer was.

It is rumored that Colonel Andrews has been demoted.

As you will recall from the discussion in Chapter 18, the passive construction is a means to topicalize the receiver of an action or the patient of the sentence rather than the agent. In the case of these sentences, there are no real “actions,” hence no real agents. However,

the “logical” subjects of *believe/know/rumor* are unstated, possibly because they are unknown or not being divulged, but also because they seem relatively irrelevant to the main message, which is the information in the embedded clauses. As we noted in Chapter 18, the verb *rumored* does not even have an active voice counterpart, as in

***People have rumored that Colonel Andrews has been demoted.**

In these sentences, extraposition of the subject clauses also seems to have taken place, seemingly for the following two related reasons: (1) heavier, lengthier constituents tend to be placed at the end of the sentence, and relatedly, (2) new information tends to fall within the predicate. In these commonly employed ways of reporting others’ utterances, then, we see the functional interaction of two grammatical constructions.

Passives may occur *within* embedded clauses as well and are presumably subject to the same conditions of use in discourse. However, the syntactic options are somewhat more limited, depending on which type of complement among those outlined in Chapter 31 is present. We will mention some of the possibilities here.

Passives may occur with cognition-utterance verbs taking tensed or infinitival complements:

Mary believed (that) her son had been given the grand prize.

Sherry thought her son to have been treated unfairly.

The choice of the passive in the second sentence seems motivated by a desire to focus on the receiver/patient (i.e., *her son*) rather than the agent. Note that while passives may occur in infinitive clauses as well, the forms of *be* must be untensed in such cases: *be/been/being* occur, but *am/is/are/was/were* do not. For *want*-type verbs, for example, we may have:

Mary wanted her son to be given the grand prize.

Again, the passive seems preferable to its active counterpart. In the case of *allow*-type verbs (*allow, cause, order, persuade*), the choice of passive voice in the complement clause sometimes may be required since the active voice would have a completely different meaning:

Michelle persuaded her son to be examined by a podiatrist. (passive complement)

Michelle persuaded a podiatrist to examine her son. (active complement)

In the case of bare-infinitive or NP + participle complements, passives may occur, bearing in mind the usual conditions of use. Recall that these complement types follow verbs of perception (*see, hear, watch, notice*) and manipulation (*make, let, have*). While the syntax of the following two pairs of sentences is identical, they differ decidedly in terms of naturalness:

We saw a squirrel eating a nut.

?We saw a nut being eaten by a squirrel.

We saw a bear chasing a man.

We saw a man being chased by a bear.

Normally, we would find it odd for a speaker observing the event depicted in the first pair of sentences to focus on the nut; however, we would not find it at all strange in the second pair to focus either on the bear or on the man; i.e., the animacy of the NP is highly relevant in that instance.

Issues of Meaning

In this and the last chapter, we have talked about complements in terms of their verbal, nominal, or adjectival frames, and the semantic classes of verbs or adjectives that pattern with one or another of these frames. One dimension of meaning that we have not explored thus far involves the issue of truth versus falsity of complements.

FACTIVE VERSUS NONFACTIVE PREDICATES

Kiparsky and Kiparsky (1970) distinguished verb and adjective predicates according to whether they carry *presuppositions*, or inherent assumptions, regarding the factual status of their complements. Some examples are listed here:

Factive Predicates

comprehend
regret
bear in mind
be significant
be odd
be clear

Nonfactive Predicates

believe
claim
maintain
seem
be likely
be possible

A factive complement clause is a clause that is true regardless of whether the higher clause is affirmative, negative, or interrogative:

John regrets that he committed the crime.

John does not regret that he committed the crime.

Does John regret that he committed the crime?

In all three examples, it remains a presumed truth that John committed the crime. In a courtroom trial, the defense attorney would likely object if the question were posed directly to the defendant as “Do you regret that you committed the crime?” Whether the question is answered “yes” or “no,” the response amounts to an admission of guilt. The same quality holds with the other words and expressions on this list of factives; whether the sentence *It is odd that our friend disappeared* is negated, questioned, or left in the affirmative, it remains true that *our friend disappeared*.

Now compare these examples with a nonfactive predicate followed by a complement. The same test yields different results with nonfactives:

The police maintain that John committed the crime.

The police do not maintain that John committed the crime.

Do the police maintain that John committed the crime?

In these sentences, there is no presumption about whether John did or did not commit the crime, regardless of whether the police have strong beliefs about John’s guilt or innocence. In a similar way, to say *It is likely that the Yankees won the game* does not presume that the Yankees won or did not win, nor is this presumed if the sentence is made negative or cast as a question.

In Chapter 31, we spoke of the Bolinger (1968) principle, which says that gerunds tend to depict events that are vivid, real, and/or fulfilled, while infinitives tend to depict events that are hypothetical, future, or unfulfilled. As it turns out, gerunds—especially those with possessive subjects—and infinitives pattern to a large extent along the factive-nonfactive dimension as well. The use of gerunds in subject position, for example, involves a presumption that the event asserted in the gerund is true; if the event is asserted not (yet) to have occurred, the sentence is slightly odd:

[John’s doing that] annoyed me.

?John’s doing that would annoy me.

If the event has not (yet) occurred, the far more likely construction would be an infinitive:

For John to do that would annoy me.

The same holds for gerunds in object position. If a gerund is used with *hate*, we expect that the event is fulfilled and thus find use of the infinitive somewhat less acceptable:

I hate his having talked like that.

?I hate for him to have talked like that.

With the conditional *would* indicating an unfulfilled condition, we get the opposite results:

I would hate for him to say that.

?I would hate his saying that.

The same distinctions may be observed with the verbs *like* and *love*, which are treated in detail in De Smet and Cuyckens (2005).

IMPLICATIVE VERBS

Karttunen (1971) identified a further semantic distinction among verbs in which assumptions about the factuality or nonfactuality of the complement depend both on the verb itself and on whether the main clause asserts or denies the complement. Such verbs can be “positive implicatives” or “negative implicatives” as follows:

| <i>Positive Implicatives</i> | <i>Negative Implicatives</i> |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| manage | fail |
| succeed | neglect |
| remember | forget |
| get | decline |
| happen | |

If we say *Paula managed to finish her work*, we assume that Paula did in fact finish it. If we say *Paula failed to finish her work*, we assume that she did not. The same holds for the other verbs on the list. When implicatives are negated, however, the situation reverses:

Paula did not manage to finish her work.

Paula did not fail to finish her work.

In the first case (a negated positive implicative), Paula did not finish her work, while in the second (a negated negative implicative), she did finish her work.

Although these examples are infinitival, it should be pointed out that *avoid* and *refrain from* are also negative implicatives, but that they take gerunds rather than infinitives:

Paula avoided getting (*to get) suspended. (She didn't get suspended.)

Amy refrained from eating (*to eat) dessert. (She didn't eat dessert.)

The majority of verbs taking infinitives are not of the implicative type. Most tend simply to be ordinary nonfactives: the use of *allow*, *believe*, *prefer*, *hate*, or *imagine* with the infinitives following them presupposes nothing about the truth of the event expressed in the complement, regardless of whether the sentence is affirmed or denied.

Some Observations on Use

THE USE OF EXTRAPOSITION

As we have seen, English has a tendency for “heavy” or dominant elements to be extraposed to the end of a sentence, with heaviness or dominance calculated mainly in terms of the length and informational value of a constituent. One function that extraposition serves is presumably a processing strategy, since dominant NPs are harder to encode and decode in initial or medial position than in final position. This is true especially where subjects are concerned, but it may occur even with other NPs in certain cases. NPs followed by relative

clause modifiers, for example, are relatively long compared to other NPs and frequently undergo a shift toward the end of the sentence:

We saw [the movie which she had spoken about] Sunday. →

We saw Sunday [the movie which she had spoken about].

Note that this would not be a possibility with shorter, simpler NPs:

We saw [the movie] last Sunday. → *We saw last Sunday [the movie].

Extraposition serves an additional function. As we have mentioned in earlier chapters, English tends to place old, given information in subject position and new information in the predicate. Since old information is typically encoded in brief form relative to the rest of the sentence (because known or assumed information requires no elaboration), postponing a longer, dominant constituent until the end of the sentence prepares listeners to pay attention to it. A sentence like the following sounds better with an extraposed subject:

Unextraposed form:

That the governor will formally announce the new sales tax bill is likely.

Extraposed form:

It is likely that the governor will formally announce the new sales tax bill.

If the bill in question is already familiar to listeners or readers and is mentioned within the subject, it would be far more likely to appear in shorter form, approximately as follows:

The governor's new sales tax bill is likely to be announced today.

Thus, the given versus new distinction may play a considerable role in a speaker's or writer's decision to extrapose.

Conversely, we might ask why someone chooses not to extrapose—why a full clause might be retained in subject position. One fairly clear case is where the predicate of the main clause itself contains a clause. The operation of extraposition in such cases may present serious problems for sentence processing:

That he always selects the correct answer shows that he has studied the material. →

?It shows that he has studied the material that he always selects the correct answer.

That you brought this matter to our attention helps us to see the true nature of the problem. →

?It helps us to see the true nature of the problem that you brought the matter to our attention.

In fact, data from Biber et al. (1999) confirm that subject complements occur most frequently in cases exactly like these. In terms of where we find such constructions, Lisovsky (1988) indicates that formal writing has a significantly higher number of clausal *that*-subjects than spoken or informal written genres. News reports and academic writing, on the whole, are more likely to have *that*-clauses in subject position than are conversation and fiction. However, overall the corpus analyses in Biber et al. show that having *that*-complement clauses in subject position is rare in all registers (i.e., extraposition is the preferred or unmarked option unless a complex predicate makes this option too unwieldy).

USE OF *IT*-EXTRAPOSITION IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Hewings and Hewings (2002) examined the use of *it*-extraposition (they call it “anticipatory *it*”) in academic writing. They noted that in published articles in the field of business administration, which was their focus, such constructions express four types of interpersonal roles:

1. **hedging:** *it is likely, it seems improbable, it could be argued . . .*
2. **marking the writer's attitude:** *it is of interest to note, it is worth pointing out, it was surprising. . . .*

3. **emphasis:** *it is evident/apparent, it must be recognized, it is clear . . .*

4. **attribution:** *it has been proposed (+ reference, i.e., by someone), it is estimated (+ no reference)*

Noting that many languages do not have such extraposed constructions, Hewings and Hewings (2002) compared the tokens of these four types of *it*-extraposition in published articles in business administration journals with tokens found in MBA theses written by nonnative speakers of English at a British university. The ESL students made some grammatical errors in the use of this construction. For example:

***It was suggested in the marketing literature by Kotler (1973) . . . to use tangible clues like physical facilities and personal appearance to enhance institutional image.**

However, the differences in the usage of extraposition by the two groups (per 1,000 words) was the primary focus of the researchers. The ESL writers used 38 percent more *it*-extrapositions than the published authors. They did this in the area of marking the writer's attitude (28 percent more tokens) and especially in the area of emphasis (91 percent more tokens). They used fewer *it*-extraposition constructions to hedge than did the published authors.

This study points out the need to teach ESL writers rhetorical functions as well as grammatical form when teaching the use of constructions like *it*-extraposition, which has multiple functions in academic writing.

USE ISSUES WITH THE *EASY-TO-PLEASE* CONSTRUCTION

We know of no published work on raising based on an examination of a large corpus that can provide an explanation of native-speaker choice. It may be that discourse focus is the key distinction here, just as it appears to be where raising occurs in *seem*-type structures. An unpublished study by Santos (n.d.) does indicate that nonnative speakers tend to disprefer raising from object to subject in cases where native speakers would raise an NP. Consider the following example (adapted from *Time*, April 27, 1998, p. 33):

Much has happened since Betty Currie first faced the Grand Jury back in January. Old friends who have been speaking with her say

a. it seems she is calm and unfazed about Round 2.

b. she seems to be calm and unfazed about Round 2.

In Santos's (n.d.) study, which involved many items like this one, nonnative speakers preferred choices like version (a), with nonraised subjects, whereas native speakers preferred versions like (b), with raised subjects, because they express better topic continuity given the discourse context. We mentioned earlier that first language patterns might be one reason for this preference. We also know that this construction can lead to ESL/EFL learner errors for several reasons. For one thing, when we consider that extraposition is also an option in some of the sentences, we are now faced with a situation of three-way synonymy among sets like these here:

I am easy to please.

That is easy (for me) to do.

It is easy to please me.

It is easy (for me) to do that.

To please me is easy.

To do that is easy (for me).

Many learners seem to blend the possibilities, producing sentences like

***I am easy to do that.**

where the intended meaning is *It is easy for me to do that*.¹⁰ The confusion is understandable. A second problem is that there is also something passivelike in the sentence *I am easy to please*; it means that someone else, not the speaker, is doing the pleasing.¹¹ Since the underlying subject that heads the infinitive in *I am easy to please* is a vague, unnamed agent—rather than

an easily inferrable one, as in *She likes [_{subj}] to play tennis*—it is somewhat logical for a learner to expect a passive here. In fact, this logic is the source of learner errors like

***I am easy to be pleased.**

Such an error is readily understood in view of the overall meaning of the sentence, but a passive infinitive is not acceptable here: the unnamed subject (e.g., *anyone*) makes the sentence active. A third source of errors arises from learners' lack of awareness that where raising occurs, an NP is moved to the left in a manner similar to relative pronoun fronting, where there can be no pronominal reflex in the original NP position; thus the ungrammaticality of the underlined pronouns:

***I am easy to please me.**

***The movie is worth watching it.**

Teachers working at intermediate to advanced levels can help students sort out the difficulties in these constructions, whose similarities of syntax and meaning make them highly confusing. Although they are syntactically marked constructions, they are relatively frequent in speech and writing, so it makes sense to devote some attention to them.

THE USE OF INFINITIVES AND GERUNDS AS SUBJECTS

Duffley (2003) examines the use of infinitives and gerunds in subject position. He proposes that the essential difference is that the gerund subject looks at “the total interiority of its event” (p. 331); i.e., it takes an inside view. In contrast, the *to*-infinitive in subject position views an event from the outside; it is “the end point of a movement leading up to its actualization” (p. 333).

Using data from a corpus, Duffley (2003) found that gerunds in subject position were strongly associated with past tense and occurred in nonconditional contexts with concrete descriptive words and phrases:

Giving up the violin opened a whole new career for Ilona Schmidt-Seeberg.

Also, no gerunds were found as subjects of predicates signaling desire, ambition, aim, purpose, or goal. Such predicates occurred exclusively with *to*-infinitives as subjects:

To vindicate Lord Raglan . . . is his purpose.

Duffley (2003) explains his results by saying that subjects taking predicates of desire and purpose are the end points of a path signaled by *to*, which can also signal future and hypothetical events, which the gerund cannot do. This is why gerunds occur with past events and with examples and explanations of attested present or general events:

Living the life of the Torah makes us meek.

Duffley (2003) also points out that when the subject and predicate are grammatically parallel (both are gerunds or both are infinitives linked with the verb *be*), they tend to express different semantic relationships:

Complimenting is lying.

To be different is to invite shame and doubt.

Here, the gerund + *be* + gerund signals identity or equivalence (=) whereas the infinitive + *be* + infinitive often signals a sequence or outcome (→), a path and its end point.

Duffley's (2003) corpus showed a very strong tendency for the *to*-infinitive in subject position to express nonreal events (90 percent). Gerunds in subject position, however, were largely indifferent to the notion of realized or nonrealized events in that both types of events were expressed with gerund subjects; and as noted earlier, only gerunds occurred with past tense and specific contexts.

Conclusion

This chapter has taken us beyond the various postverbal complements presented in Chapter 31 to a consideration of six new constructions:

1. Subject-to-subject raising with verbs like *seem* and adjectives like *(un)likely*:
Bob seems to be unhappy. John is unlikely to succeed.
2. Complex NP complements where *that*-clauses or infinitives function as complements of noun phrases:
**The fact that Mary left is surprising.
I couldn't pass up a chance to play poker with Roger.**
3. A variety of adjective complements, including *that*-clauses and infinitives:
I am happy that you came. I am happy to be here.
4. Extraposition of complements:
**That he said something along those lines does not surprise me →
It does not surprise me that he said something along those lines.**
5. Object-to-subject raising:
It is easy to please Peter. → Peter is easy to please.
6. Complex passives, where either the main clause or the complement (or both) are in the passive voice:
It is expected that the award will be won by Joe.

We also discussed the use of infinitives and gerunds in subject position and introduced some new meaning distinctions that are important to consider when dealing with complements: factive versus nonfactive predicates and implicative verbs. Many of these constructions yield roughly synonymous sentences when considered in isolation, but then it turns out that one construction is strongly preferred over others when the discourse context is considered. For example, when the speaker or writer is introducing new information, extraposition often occurs with the new information in its prototypical predicate position:

It seems to me that Ralph has been irritable lately.

Once the new information has been introduced, it can be condensed, often through nominalization, and moved to subject position (the position for old information), allowing further new information to be expressed in the predicate:

Ralph's recent irritability suggests that he may not be getting enough sleep.

Likewise, the choice between (1) and (2) here most often depends on the discourse context:

1. It's easy to please Peter.

2. Peter is easy to please.

If the prior discourse is *Tell me something about Peter*, then the following utterance is likely to be (2). However, if the prior discourse is *What's easy to do?* then the answer is likely to be (1). The fact of rough synonymy here means that issues of use, as well as form and meaning, come to the fore as dimensions of ESL/EFL teaching.

Of course, learners may well learn these constructions through usage. In such cases, learners will encounter them, at least initially, as whole chunks. However, our point is that students will benefit tremendously from knowledge of the options available to them. That is the sort of information that ESL/EFL teachers can more readily provide.

In the next chapter, we will see how complex constructions are put to use in reported speech and writing.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form/Use.** Learning the rules for raising, extraposition, *easy-to-please*, and complex passives helps students to become aware of a variety of syntactic forms that share essentially the same meaning. Because the variations are roughly synonymous, there is some value in simply presenting students with one form and having them create other roughly synonymous variants; for example:

That Seattle is so rainy does not bother me.

(→ It does not bother me that Seattle is so rainy.)

To work with clay is interesting.

(→ It's interesting to work with clay./Clay is interesting to work with.)

People believe that electric cars may soon be popular.

(→ It is believed that electric cars may soon be popular.)

The fact that John passed the exam is not surprising.

(→ John's passing the exam is not surprising.)

However, it is also of value where more complex constructions are concerned for students to see how the constructions pattern in naturally occurring discourse. After introducing the constructions and their functions in class, teachers should present whole paragraphs from written texts that they have collected and ask students why a writer may have chosen one structure over the other. (In many cases, of course, no definitive answer may be obvious.) Another option would be for students to collect example paragraphs containing one or more of these structures from the opinion section of the daily newspaper (where syntax tends to be somewhat more complex) and to present them to the class, offering their own explanations of why the writers chose to write the sentences in the way that they did.

2. **Form.** Practicing *easy-to-please* constructions might go hand in hand with practice with stranded prepositions (see Chapter 21). Both might be worked on in the context of small groups, with each student having to solve a problem that is relatively quick to solve, such as a scrambled-word sentence or a small crossword puzzle. Each group works in pairs or threes to perform the tasks. The teacher then proceeds to model questions in both forms for the first group of students as follows:

Teacher: What was Ali working on?

Student 1: He was working on a crossword puzzle.

Teacher: Was it hard for Ali to solve the puzzle, or was the puzzle easy to solve? Ask him.

Student 1: Was it hard for you to solve the puzzle, or was it easy to solve?

Ali: It was very hard for me to solve. It was impossible to solve.

The teacher can then present a larger range of adjectives—*fun*, *interesting*, *boring*, *challenging*, and *impossible*—and have students query each other in their groups as to the difficulty of their tasks. They can then report their results to the class as a whole.

An alternative to this task might be a question-and-verification sequence, in which the teacher models the first question and the verification question, using alternative forms in each sentence. The students then reply directly to the form of each type of question:

Teacher: Alicia, is it hard to drive a car?

Student 1: Yes, it is hard to drive a car.

Teacher: Grace, is a car really hard to drive?

Student 2: No, a car is really not hard to drive.

Students can then work in groups, taking turns asking each other such questions while using the adjectives on the blackboard as options.

3. **Form.** A clause-combining exercise may help students integrate some of the constructions in this chapter and the previous one in such a way as to allow them not only to master the formal aspects but also the stylistic ones. It is important to point out the usefulness of lexical bundles like *the fact (that . . .)* in clause combining in view of the impossibility of *that*-clauses occurring after prepositions. With these things in mind, teachers can set sentences like those given here side by side and have students turn them into all the possible grammatical sentences they can think of, allowing them to bring in other clause types they know (such as relative clauses and adverbial clauses, for example). The resulting sentences may or may not express identical ideas:

a. My brother sleeps late.

That bothers me.

I can't play my music.

That is a fact.

1. It bothers me that my brother sleeps late because of the fact that I can't play my music.
2. The fact that my brother sleeps late bothers me because I can't play my music.
3. My brother's sleeping late means that I can't play my music, and that fact bothers me.

b. It's unfortunate.

You won't be able to join me for lunch.

My friend is in town.

You wanted to meet my friend.

1. (The fact) that you won't be able to join me for lunch is unfortunate because my friend who(m) you wanted to meet is in town.
2. It's unfortunate that you won't be able to join me for lunch because my friend is in town who(m) you wanted to meet.

c. Something is (not) likely.

My brother will remember something.

Next Friday is my birthday.

My parents will call my brother.

My parents will remind my brother.

1. It is not likely that my brother will remember my birthday, which is next Friday, even though my parents will call him to tell him that.
2. It is likely that my parents will call my brother to remind him that next Friday is my birthday, but my brother will not remember.

One advantage of this kind of activity is that teachers have the opportunity to guide students away from the less felicitous combinations that result and toward more natural-sounding ones. At the same time, however, students often come up with quite sensible combinations that the teacher would never have thought of!

There is an alternative, more contextualized way of doing this sort of exercise, but it will somewhat constrain the possible combinations. With some integration, individual combined clause sets may be sequenced in such a way as to form a coherent story or other text, provided the right combinations are chosen. Teachers choosing this option may select paragraphs from newspapers or magazines and adapt them for the purpose of the exercise, creating three- and four-sentence sets of short clauses to combine.

4. **Form.** The form of raising structures can be practiced with the help of a series of pictures that depict a progression of events (e.g., comic strips with dialogue removed or picture storybooks without words can be useful visual aids). The teacher can tell students that they cannot be absolutely certain of what is happening in the pictures, so they will have to hedge their descriptions with verbs like *seem*, *appear*, and *look like*. This can be a good opportunity for students to practice relatively focused raising structures and relatively unfocused *it*-structures. The teacher can ask a general question first:

Teacher: What is happening in this picture?

Appropriate responses might be

Student 1: It seems that it is a very windy day.

Student 2: It looks like it is a very windy day in the mountains.

The teacher can then zero in on individuals in the picture and ask,

Teacher: What is *the man* doing?

An appropriate response which focuses on the man would be

Student: The man seems to be holding onto his hat.

This sort of questioning can continue for the other pictures, until the last one:

Teacher: How did the story turn out?

Student: It turned out that everyone was safe inside a cabin.

Teacher: Who did the man turn out to be?

Student: He turned out to be a very famous movie star.

The task is also easily adaptable as a written exercise involving narration and description.

5. **Form/Meaning.** Complex-NP complement structures like *the fact that*, *the recommendation that*, and so on can be practiced by providing students with a list of possible NPs like the following:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| the fact | the news |
| the claim | the belief |
| the idea | the announcement/report |
| the possibility/chance | the recommendation/proposal |
| the likelihood/probability | the demand |
| the suggestion | the argument |

Students then are given sentences to be turned into complements of suitable NPs chosen from the list; these may include NPs that take subjunctive complements. The sentences represent controversial statements likely to elicit responses of different types:

- a. It has just been announced on the news that engineering students will pay higher college tuition because they will make higher salaries in the future.

Possible responses:

1. The idea that engineering students should pay higher tuition is ridiculous because they will not necessarily make higher salaries.
2. There is no possibility that engineering students will pay higher tuition.
3. I am surprised to hear the news that engineering students will pay higher tuition because it does not seem fair.

- b. Cars should be banned completely from the downtown area.

Possible responses:

1. I completely agree with the recommendation that cars be banned from the downtown area because it will reduce traffic.
2. The proposal that cars be banned from the downtown area will cause big problems.
3. There is no likelihood that cars will be banned from the downtown area because people need to drive through this area.

This exercise can be adapted to an essay-writing task in which students develop an argumentative response to one or another of the statements.

Exercises

Test your ability to understand what has been presented.

1. *Provide an example sentence (or pairs of sentences) for each of the following terms.*

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| a. subject raising | e. extraposition |
| b. complex NP | f. <i>easy-to-please</i> constructions |
| c. adjective complement | g. complex passive |
| d. clausal subject | h. factive verb |

2. *State why the following sentences are ungrammatical:*

- a. *It seems John to be a successful businessman.
- b. *They avoided that hotel due to it was so expensive.
- c. *To watch Tanya skate it's interesting.
- d. *Nobody ever complains proves this is a happy office.

3. *Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences:*

- a. It seems clear that someone has made a mistake.
- b. The idea is preposterous that parrots are linguistic geniuses.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

4. *Suppose that a writing student who has produced the following sentences asks why you have identified them as incorrect. How would you answer?*

- a. *Is not true that Olivia missed her train.
- b. *I thought I was easy to walk that far.
- c. *This kind of movie is boring to be watched.

5. *One way has been mentioned in this chapter for distinguishing between relative clauses with that and noun complements with that: the word that at the beginning of the complement clause cannot be identified with an NP in the clause the way the relative pronoun that can. Can you think of another test that can serve to distinguish them?*

6. In this chapter, we have presented the categories factive and nonfactive to classify verbs. How would you classify the verbs *see* and *understand* based on the following example sentences?

- a. I see that you've bought a new car.
- b. The drunken sailor saw snakes crawling on the floor.
- c. I now understand that there is a faster route to Houston.
- d. I understood Sheila to say that she was from Houston.

Explain your answer based on the criteria presented in the chapter.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Raising to subject and extraposition are discussed in a traditional generative framework in:

Akmajian, A., & Heny, F. (1975). *An introduction to the principles of transformational syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

A functional discussion of raising, including the *easy-to-please* construction appears in:

Givón, T. (1990). *Syntax: A functional-typological introduction* (Vol. 2). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

The types of extraposition outlined here and some additional proposed types are discussed in:

Baltin, M. (1981). Strict bounding. In C. L. Baker & J. J. McCarthy (Eds.), *The logical problem of language acquisition* (pp. 257–295). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London, England: Longman.

Radford, A. (1988). *Transformational grammar: A first course*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

For additional studies on *it*-extraposition, see:

Kaltenbock, G. (2003). On the syntactic and semantic status of anticipatory “it.” *English Language and Linguistics*, 7(2), 235–255.

Kaltenbock, G. (2005). *It*-extraposition in English: A functional review. *International Journal of Computational Linguistics*, 10(2), 119–159.

Peacock, M. (2011). A comparative study of introductory “it” in research articles across eight disciplines. *International Journal of Computational Linguistics*, 16(1), 72–100.

For a description and corpus analysis of complements, see:

Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman grammar of spoken and written English*. Harlow, Essex, England: Pearson Education Ltd.

Grammar textbooks for ESL/EFL students seldom distinguish raising-type infinitives from other types previously discussed in Chapter 31, nor do they normally treat extraposition as a whole. However, many books have sections on subject extraposition; that is, moving subject noun clauses to the end of the sentences and then inserting *it* whenever a surface subject is required. Some of the texts teaching subject extraposition are:

Bunting, J., & Diniz, L. (with Reppen, R.). (2013). *Grammar and beyond 4*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Thewlis, S. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 3* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Houck, N., & Hilles, S. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 4*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

A presentation of the *fact that* and other noun complement structures as well as of adjective complements appear in:

Frodesen, J., & Eyring, J. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 4* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For a lesson focusing on complex passives, see:

Cake, C. D. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 5*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Endnotes

1. One reason for the raising analysis is that this type of structure is not quite like the one for verbs like *hope*, where the subject of the sentence is identical to the understood subject in the infinitive clause:

**They hope [*<subj>* to win the game]
subj= they**

The two structures are also different because, among other things, it is possible to have the semantically vague *there* in subject position in the main clause if the main verb is *seem*, but not if the main verb is *hope*:

**There seems to be something wrong.
*There hopes to be something wrong.**

The idea is that something must be controlling the reference of the subject of the embedded infinitive if the main verb is *hope*, and the word *there* cannot fulfill this requirement since *there* does not refer to anything specific. With *seem*, however, control does not seem to be an issue; after all, we can say *There seems to be something wrong*.

2. Some generative grammarians have accounted for the ungrammaticality of this sentence by invoking the Empty Category Principle, which says, among other things, that one cannot remove subjects out of embedded *that*-clauses.
3. In more formal registers, we have *as if* appearing in place of *like* in these sentences. Since *as if* is already an adverb subordinator, the addition of the complementizer *that* would result in ungrammatical sentences here as well. In fact, one could argue that *like* is also functioning as an adverb subordinator in these sentences.
4. We have not listed *uncertain* here since although we can say *We are certain to return the merchandise*, we cannot say **We are uncertain to return the merchandise*.
5. It is, of course, also worthwhile to show that there are less wordy alternatives to sentences like these. As style manuals have long pointed out, the expression *due to the fact that* can be replaced simply with *because*.
6. Baker (1989) calls these clauses *pseudocomplements*, in that they are understood as moved sentential subjects even though they appear in a part of the sentence where clausal complements tend to occur.
7. In some cases, more than one type of extraposition may even occur in one and the same sentence:

?It's odd that the customers were so dissatisfied who ate the lobster.

Before extraposition: [That the customers [who ate the lobster] were so dissatisfied] is odd.

Extraposition 1: [] is odd [that the customers [who ate the lobster] were dissatisfied].

Extraposition 2: [] is odd [that the customers were dissatisfied [who ate the lobster]].

With the addition of *it* to function as the subject, the sentence is structurally complete.

8. This construction is also referred to as "object raising" (Emonds, 1976, pp. 77–78).
9. While the *easy-to-please* construction is usually associated with infinitives, at least one very common verb + *-ing* construction, *be worth V + -ing*, seems to follow a similar pattern:
It's worth watching a good program. → A good program is worth watching.
10. A possible additional source of blending might be the construction *too + adj, to + verb*, as in *I am too tired to talk* (see Chapter 35).
11. This characteristic, incidentally, distinguishes this construction from other similar-looking ones where the alternation with *it* is not possible:

Salma is happy to help. *It is happy to help Salma.

Kim is too tired to go out. *It is too tired to go out Kim.

Reported Speech and Writing

CHAPTER

33

Introduction

In many kinds of speech and writing—whether conversations, formal speeches, journalism, or academic texts—speakers and writers frequently refer to the statements or ideas of others. Grammar and rhetoric books typically identify three ways in which we may cite the ideas of others: direct quotation, indirect reported speech (including reported written text), and paraphrase as illustrated in the following examples:

Original source (J. Smith): **School budgets will not be cut during this recession.**

Quotation: **Smith stated, “School budgets will not be cut during this recession.”**

Reported speech: **Smith stated that school budgets would not be cut during this recession.**

Paraphrase: **Smith stated that during the recession no reductions in school budgets would occur.**

In the teaching of written English for academic purposes, instruction related to reported speech and writing focuses on the linguistic and rhetorical conventions for referencing sources, including the vocabulary and grammar of reporting verbs and phrases to introduce source materials, choosing between quotation and paraphrasing, strategies for paraphrasing and, for advanced students, the practices of their disciplines in reporting research. As Hyland (2000) and others have shown through corpus-based studies, significant differences exist across disciplines in citation conventions. Also, it is well-known that reporting others’ ideas in writing is an important skill to master in order to avoid plagiarism.

As for reporting others’ words in speech situations, instructors will want to help their students understand the different ways that speakers may signal reported speech in monologic narratives, conversations, and other interactive contexts such as group discussions. As researchers examining conversational data have pointed out, there are ways that English speakers mark reported speech, such as intonation, pauses, and expressions like *be like* that are typically not found in ESL/EFL textbooks. And in some reported speech situations, there may be a blending of the forms we typically identify as belonging to either indirect or direct quoted speech.

The Form of Reported Speech Structures

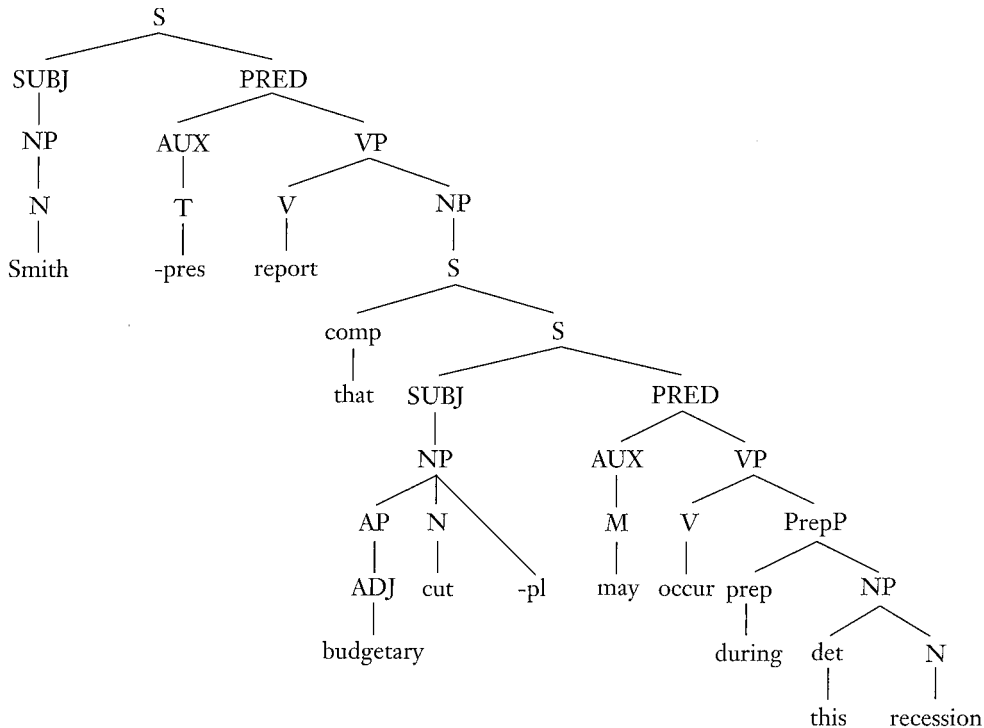
THAT-CLAUSES

Indirect reports at the sentence level can appear in several grammatical frames, but reporting most commonly involves creating complements to a reporting verb such as *say* or *report*. We discuss these frames and verbs more fully later; for the present, we note that ordinary

that-clauses are probably the most common way in which indirect reporting is done in spoken and written narratives, journalism, and some academic disciplines. Recall that the *that* complementizer is structurally optional and that pragmatic factors govern its presence or absence (see the use section below).

That-clauses were presented in Chapter 31 as objects of a main verb. We can thus use this analysis for those indirect reports that have *that* clauses:

Smith reports that budgetary cuts may occur during this recession.



SEQUENCE OF TENSES

When a quotation is reported as indirect speech, reported clauses with tensed verbs are traditionally subject to a rule referred to as *sequence of tenses* or *backshifting*, which is described below.

Backshifting

The standard textbook treatment of the sequence-of-tenses rule, in both descriptive and pedagogical grammars, says that the tense in reported clauses is in some sense controlled by the tense in the reporting clause: when the reporting verb is in the past tense, the verb in the reported clause must “backshift.” The paradigm below illustrates the contexts in which this phenomenon traditionally does and does not occur:

1. Original sentence: “**I am leaving** tomorrow.” (= *present progressive*)
 Report:
Simple present—no backshifting:
 She **says** that she **is leaving** tomorrow.
Present perfect—no backshifting:

She **has said** that she **is leaving tomorrow**.

Simple past + backshifting to past progressive:

She **said** that she **was leaving** tomorrow/the next day.

2. Original sentence: "**I left** yesterday." (= *simple past*)

Report:

Simple present—no backshifting:

She **says** that she **left** yesterday.

Present perfect—no backshifting:

She **has said** that she **left** yesterday.

Simple past + backshifting to past perfect:

She **said** that she **had left** yesterday/the day before.

3. Original sentence: "**I have left** already." (= *present perfect*)

Report:

Simple present—no backshifting:

She **says** that she **has left** already.

Simple past + backshifting to past perfect:

She **said** that she **had left** already.

4. Original sentence: "**I had left** earlier." (= *past perfect*)

Report:

Simple present—no backshifting:

She **says** that she **had left** earlier.

Simple past—no backshifting possible:

She **said** that she **had left** earlier.

5. Original sentence: "**I will leave** soon." (*modal, future*)

Report:

Simple present—no backshifting:

She **says** that she **will leave** soon.

Simple past + backshifting:

She **said** that she **would leave** soon.

6. Original hypothetical sentence, not yet uttered: "**I have** the answer."

Report:

Modal, future—no backshifting:¹

She **will say** that she **has** the answer.

As the examples illustrate, tense shifting occurs only when the main verb is in a past tense; otherwise the tense remains as in the original quotation. What is most important to notice is that the tense in the reported clause bears no necessary relation to whether the actual event described is in the past at the time the report is made. That is, if one says on March 11, "She said today that she *was* leaving on March 15," the listener will interpret the woman's date of departure to be in four days—that is, four days in the future from the listener/speaker's perspective—rather than a March date in some previous year. In other words, a shift in *perspective* occurs with regard to the time of the utterance reported on, which is of necessity in the past.

The traditional tense switch is, in most cases, accompanied by:

- a. the changing of pronouns from first-person (*I/we*) to third-person (*she/he/they*) forms
- b. the changing of *tomorrow* to *the next day* and the changing of *yesterday* to *the day before*.

Such changes are called *deictic shifts*, from the Greek word *deixis* meaning “to point,” a term previously mentioned elsewhere in this book. These shifts will be described in the course of this chapter.

Exceptions to Backshifting

What makes the backshifting rule more difficult for English learners is that there are exceptions in use—a fact which most descriptive and ESL/EFL grammar books acknowledge, and some which call the “rule” into question. Unfortunately, research has not yet revealed a completely satisfying unity among these exceptions. We list three standard exceptions here:

State-Event Remains True. Thompson (1994), drawing on a corpus database, suggests that present tense is retained in reported clauses when the author wishes to emphasize that the state or event in question still holds true at the time of reporting and/or is not presented as something temporary. He offers as illustration the following example, where the first sentence deals with a general on-going policy (no tense shift) and the second sentence deals with a specific situation (tense shift) (pp. 109ff):

A Foreign Ministry spokesman *said* government policy is not to sell arms to sensitive areas. But he *said* his country *needed* the income to convert arms factories to non military production.

Perceived General Truths. Many sources such as Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) mention as a chief source of exceptions cases of general truths, as in their examples (p. 1027),

Their teacher told them that the earth *moves* around the sun.

Socrates said that nothing *can* harm a good man.

It seems that the principle underlying this exception involves what is *perceived* to be general or timeless truth; in such cases, we hold that we cannot imagine a state of affairs in the world other than the one we have mentally committed ourselves to. As a hypothetical contrastive case in point, consider the case of a child who is told by a trusted older sister that, for example, seven plus four equals twelve. The child might say, “My sister told me that seven plus four is twelve.” Upon hearing otherwise from a (more trusted) teacher and committing inwardly to this new answer, the child might say to the sister (perhaps in disappointment or anger), “You told me that seven plus four was twelve.” The actual sum presumably remains constant regardless of anyone’s belief, but the child’s mental *commitment* to the general truth of a certain sum has changed.

Immediate Reports. A third case in which tense shifting tends not to occur involves a specific discourse context. When a statement is reported to a third person by a second person immediately following its utterance by a first person, it will often tend to be repeated with its original tenses unchanged:²

Speaker A: We will be having polenta for lunch.

Speaker B: What did he say?

Speaker C: He said we’ll be having polenta for lunch.

An awareness of these exceptions to backshifting should be useful for ESL/EFL students, especially those regarding state or events that hold true in the present. However, as McCarthy (1998) suggested, instructors should not “be over obsessed with backshift and sequence of tenses” (or their exceptions) in indirect speech when teaching about reported speech and

writing (p. 172). As we will be discussing in further sections, there are many variations in the forms of reporting others' words as well as a rich array of functions across registers and genres, much of which should be of interest to and useful for learners of English.

OTHER DEICTIC SHIFTS

As we mentioned earlier, the use of reported speech may require not only shifts in tense but also shifts in time and place adverbials and in personal and demonstrative pronouns.

Time/Place Adverbial Shifts

In the example given at the beginning of this chapter,

"School budgets will not be cut during this recession."—Smith

a reasonable paraphrase might contain either *this* or *that*, but the implications will be different:

1. **Smith predicted that no school budget cuts would occur during *this* recession.**
2. **Smith predicted that no school budget cuts would occur during *that* recession.**

In the first case, the reader or hearer will assume that the recession in question is still ongoing at the time that the paraphrase is written; in the second case, one might easily assume with the use of *that* that the recession is over at the time of writing.

Likewise, options are available in two of the examples shown above for the backshifting rule, where *tomorrow* alternates with *the next day* and *yesterday* alternates with *the day before*, depending on the relation of the time of original utterance to the time of reported utterance. Such shifts in time are marked quite systematically and without overlap, as the following comparative tables show. The first table contains expressions with speaker-time, i.e. the moment of speaking, as the point of reference; the expressions in the second table are used with some point in the past as the reference-point:

| EXPRESSIONS USED WITH REFERENCE TO TIME OF SPEAKING | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------|---------------|--|--|------------|--------------|----------------|---|---------|----------|--|
| Past | | | Present | | | | | | Future | | |
| (6:00 P.M.).....(midnight)....(7:00).....(8:00) | | | (9:00 A.M.) (10:00)....(11:00)....(5:00)(midnight)...(8:00 A.M.) | | | | | | | | |
| yesterday | last night | two hours ago | an hour ago | NOW (= time of utterance, speaker-time) | in an hour | in two hours | this afternoon | this evening | tonight | tomorrow | |
| | | | | at this time/moment/today | | | | | | | |
| { the day before yesterday three days ago last week last year } | | | | | | | | { the day after tomorrow in three days next week (in a week) next year (in a year) } | | | |

EXPRESSIONS USED WITH REFERENCE TO SHIFTED TIME ³

| <i>Past-in-Past</i> | <i>Past</i> | <i>Future-in-Past</i> |
|--|---|--|
| (6:00 P.M.)...(midnight)...(7:00)....(8:00) | (9:00 A.M.) (10:00).....(11:00).... (5:00).....(midnight).....(8:00 A.M.) | |
| the day before, the previous day, a day earlier | the day before, the previous day, a day earlier | the day before, the previous day, a day earlier |
| the night before | the night before | the night before |
| two hours before (earlier) | two hours before (earlier) | two hours later |
| an hour before (earlier) | an hour before (earlier) | an hour later |
| | THEN (time of event/ reference-time) | |
| | at that time/moment that day | |
| | | |
| <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> three days before (earlier) a week before the week before the year before </div> | | <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> three days later (afterward) a week later (afterward) the next (following) week the next (following) year </div> |

The parallel between these adverbials and tense-backshifting is evident; however, there are no “exceptions” as there were with tense choice. One cannot use the adverb *tomorrow* to talk about the day after the day that is talked about in a reported (dependent) clause unless the condition for using *tomorrow* in a report still prevails in the reporting clause as well. Likewise, one cannot use *the next day* in an utterance to refer to the day after the utterance unless the condition for using this expression still obtains in the reporting clause.

The same considerations apply to place-deictics, although the range of distinctions is not as large: the adverb *here* becomes *there* (or vice versa), but this shift also depends on whether the reported utterance was or was not uttered in the same location as the report. If the two places remain identical, then there is no shift; if they lack identity, there is a shift:

| <i>Original quote</i> | <i>Report: Uttered in the same room</i> | <i>Report: Uttered elsewhere</i> |
|--|--|---|
| "I have been cleaning { here } { this room } all day." | She said she had been cleaning { here } { this room } all day. | She said she had been cleaning { there } { that room } all day. |

Deictic Shifts in Pronouns

Just as time and place adverbials shift, pronominal forms also change as necessary. Most commonly, first- and second-person forms change to third-person forms:

| <i>Original quote</i> | <i>Reported utterance</i> |
|---|---|
| "I hope that a solution to the problem will soon be found." | Smith said that he hoped that a solution to the problem would soon be found. |

Quoted third-person forms can of course be shifted to first-and second-person forms if the reference of the form is to the reporter or the reader/listener of the report:

| <i>Original quote by Mary</i> | <i>Report by Fred</i> | <i>Response to by someone speaking/writing to Fred</i> |
|---|---|--|
| "I hope that Fred gets better soon." | Mary says that she hopes I get better soon. | Mary says that she hopes you get better soon. |

In the two reporting sentences, note that the complementizer *that* may be omitted from the second clause to avoid repetition of *that*.

In another set of circumstances, a first-person form might be properly paraphrased by a second-person form, and vice versa, when interlocutors are reporting on their own and each other's speech:

| <i>Original quote</i> | <i>Report</i> | <i>Response to report</i> |
|--|--|--|
| "I am going to follow your advice." | You said you were going to follow my advice. | Yes, I said I was going to follow your advice. |

In general, time/place adverbial shifts and pronoun shifts seldom leave the reporter with more than a single proper choice among forms. In this they contrast with backshifts in verb tense, which frequently permit real options. While pronoun shifts pose relatively few problems for ESL/EFL students, it is worthwhile for a teacher to spend some time focusing on adverbial shifts because, as with tense shift, the required changes are not always reflected in exactly the same ways in other languages' conventions for encoding time and place expressions.

SHIFTING AND PARTIAL QUOTATIONS

We have presented the complementizer *that* as a specific signal of indirect speech or a paraphrase. It is not used to preface full quotations. Thus, a sequence like the following is not acceptable:

***He said *that*, "The strong economy is likely to improve still further this year."**

On the other hand, *that* is acceptable when a mixture of quotation and paraphrase is used in reporting and the quotation does not directly follow *that*:

Paraphrase

Quotation

He said *that* the economy, which has been strong, "is likely to improve still further this year."

Such mixing of paraphrase and quotation may be constrained, however, by the need for the various shifts we have discussed. For example,

| <i>Direct quotation</i> | <i>Full indirect report</i> | <i>Partial indirect report</i> |
|--|---|--|
| The mayor told me, "I am impressed with the level of your commitment this year to the betterment of our city." | The mayor told me that he was impressed with the level of my commitment that year to the betterment of our city. | *The mayor told me that he was impressed with "the level of your commitment this year to the betterment of our city." |

The problem in the last example is related to the need for complete deictic shifts throughout the report. Without these shifts, the references of *your*, *our*, and *this/that year* are unclear, causing serious comprehension problems for readers. Where deictic shifts are possible in reporting, a writer has three choices: (a) full quotation, (b) full paraphrase, or (c) the use of shifted deictics in square brackets within quotations to replace the original, unshifted ones:

The mayor told me that he was “impressed with the degree of [my] commitment [that] year to the betterment of our city.”

Let us now look at reported speech that involves constructions other than ordinary *that*-clauses.

SUBJUNCTIVES

We have already outlined the nature of subjunctive clauses in Chapter 31 on complementation. The same general features exist with reporting verbs as with other subjunctives. First, there is no tense in the complement, which means that backshifting does not apply:

Speaker A: I recommend that you leave tomorrow.

She recommends that we leave tomorrow.

She recommended that we leave tomorrow/the next day.

She had recommended that we leave tomorrow/the next day.

Deictic shifts in pronouns and time adverbials, however, do apply as with ordinary *that*-clauses, as the examples illustrate. Specifically, *you* is changed to *we* in reference to the speaker reporting; *tomorrow* may be changed to *the next day*. Second, as we showed in Chapter 31, the verbs that take subjunctive complements all involve an agent who is oriented toward inducing another agent to perform an act. These verbs might usefully be ordered along a scale from weak to strong: *suggest*, *propose*, *recommend*, *urge*, *ask* (in the sense of *request*), *require*, and *demand*. Verbs that take subjunctives already have the notions of *should* or *must* as part of their meaning; thus, the complements typically do not take modal verbs such as *must* (**She demanded that I must go.*). Teachers should expect many second-language difficulties in producing these constructions; learners often use modals with verbs in *that*-complements after verbs like *suggest* or *recommend*, or they may use infinitival complements, as in **She recommended me to go.* Since subjunctives really represent only a small subset of English verbs, students tend to overgeneralize the more commonly occurring complement frames to them.

INDIRECT IMPERATIVES

Many imperative sentences can be reported accurately with verbs such as *demand* or *insist* that take subjunctive *that*-clause complements:

“Please go away!” → She asked/insisted that he (please) go away.

Imperatives can also be reported with ordinary *that*-clauses (the presence of the indirect object with verbs like *tell* is dealt with later in the chapter):

“Please go away!” → She said that he should go away.

→ She told me that I should go away.

However, it is probably most common for imperatives to be paraphrased with infinitival complements when using the main-clause reporting verbs *tell*, *order*, *ask*:

“Please go away!” → She told (asked, ordered) him to (please) go away.

Imperatives can, of course, be used for purposes other than outright commands. They can, for instance, be used for invitations, as in

“Stop by for some dessert and coffee tonight!”

→ **He asked us to stop by for some dessert and coffee tonight.** (*asked = invited*)

Indirect imperatives with *to* tend to be much less problematical for ESL/EFL students than subjunctive forms, perhaps because they are simpler and also occur much more frequently in native speaker conversation.

INDIRECT QUESTIONS

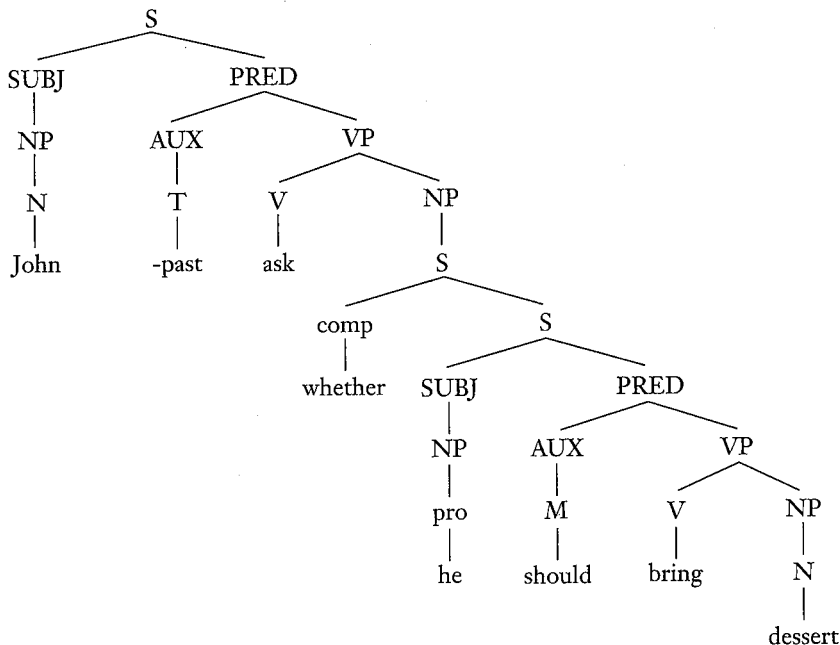
An *indirect question* (or *embedded question*) is so called because the utterer is typically not asking a question but reporting a real or hypothetical question.⁴ The difference between direct and hypothetical questions may be illustrated with the following pair of sentences:

Is anyone interested in the movie?

She wants to know *whether/if* anyone is interested in the movie.

In the first case, the speaker is asking the question, while in the second case, the speaker may simply wish to state a fact about someone else's wishes and does so with *whether* or *if* plus a dependent clause. Just as we have placed the complementizer *that* into a comp position directly under the embedded S, just to the left of the embedded S position, so will we place *whether/if* into comp in *yes/no* indirect questions. In all other respects, the trees are identical. Here is a tree for an indirect *yes/no* question with *whether*:

John asked whether he should bring dessert.



Word Order in Indirect Questions

We covered the form, meaning, and use of direct *yes/no* and *wh*-questions in Chapters 11 and 13. There, we discussed the fact that direct questions involve subject-operator inversion and the need in certain cases to add a form of the operator *do*. Thus we get pairs like,

| Statement | | Direct Question |
|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Susan can come with us. | → | Can Susan come with us? |
| John walks to school. | → | Does John walk to school? |
| She has bought a new car. | → | What has she bought? |
| We arrived before noon. | → | When did you arrive? |

In contrast, indirect *yes/no* and *wh*-questions involve no movement and no use of the *do* operator; clauses follow normal declarative subject-verb-object order:

Indirect Question

Mary asked [whether Susan could come with us].

(*Mary asked whether could Susan come with us.)

They inquired [what she had bought].

(*They inquired what had she bought.)

Since there is no movement of an operator, there is also no need for addition of the *do* operator in indirect questions that have no inherent operator:

They asked us [when we arrived].

(*They asked us when { we did }
{ did we } arrive.)

While *do* may be used in the uninverted word order with heavy stress to mark the emphatic *do*, it cannot be used in the normal way simply as a syntactic operator.

The rule of non-inversion in embedded questions, which is considered standard, is complicated by the fact that English speakers do not always follow it, particularly in speech. In some dialects, such as African American English and some regional dialects such as the one spoken in the New York City area, subject and operator are often inverted in embedded questions as they would be in unembedded questions:

?She asked where was I going.

?They asked what was the time.

We see further evidence of inverted subject and operator in embedded questions constructions in both written and spoken data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA):

King was asked what was the greatest satisfaction he got from his job. (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 2005)

You know, you asked what was the lesson of the story we just watched. (Ann Curry, *NBC Today*, 2008)

In the first example above, we see what appears to be tense backshifting and pronoun shifts in respect to what was most likely the original question: “What **is** the greatest satisfaction **you get** from **your** job?” In the second example, the form of the original source is less clear, but tense backshifting seems to occur: “What **is** the lesson of the story **you/we** just watched?” In both of these examples, the clausal postmodification of the two head nouns, *satisfaction* and *lesson*, may have influenced the inverted forms since otherwise the verbs would either have to follow a long noun phrase or be inserted somewhere in between (e.g., *what the greatest satisfaction was that he got from his job*). Such a non-inverted form would be more difficult to produce in real time speech.

Further research is needed to show the extent of such inversion and what pragmatic factors, such as the length of subject noun modification or of the entire embedded question, can help explain the environments in which inversion most often occurs.

Main-Verb Choices and Complementizer Types in Indirect Questions

There is a much smaller range of main-clause verb choices in indirect question constructions than in indirect declarative statements. The most common verbs are *ask*, *inquire*, and *wonder*. All can take either tensed-clause or subject-controlled infinitival complements. In the case of complements with a tense or modal, where the indirect question is of a *yes/no* type, either *whether* or *if* may appear as the complementizer:

John asked (whether/if) he should bring dessert.

For infinitives, only *whether* may appear:

John asked (whether/*if) to bring dessert.

Such questions can also be introduced with phrasal expressions such as these examples from COCA:

I wanted to know whether he was planning to resign.

She didn't know if they would be safe.

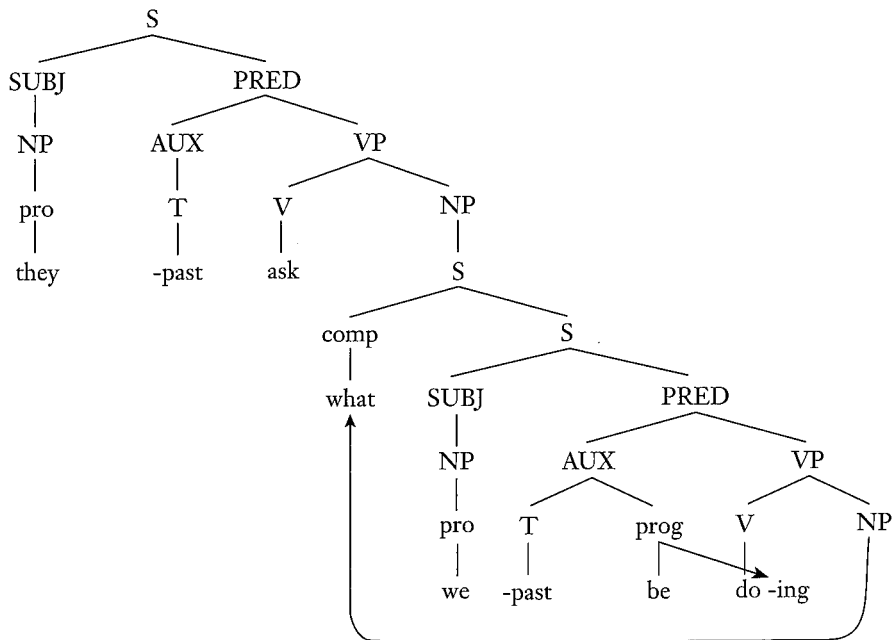
It's a good question whether they are smart enough to work here.

In the case of indirect *wh*-questions, the *wh*-word or expression serves in place of *whether/if* as a complementizer. The logical subject of the infinitive is the same as the subject of the sentence as a whole.⁵

- a. **We wondered [what we should do in case of an emergency].**
- b. **We wondered [what to do in case of an emergency].**
- c. **We wondered [which plants we should water].**
- d. **We wondered [which plants to water].**

The tree for an embedded indirect *wh*-question, after *wh*-fronting applies, is:

They asked what we were doing.



rule: *wh*-fronting

It is not always the case that sentences containing *wh*-words are indirect questions. Recall from Chapter 29 that sentence can also have free relatives (*who, which*) and relative adverbials (*where, when, how, why*). Some verbs associated with such cases are *discover, explain, find out, know, learn, show, teach, and tell*:

We found out [who we should call].

An electrician should know [how one fixes an electrical short].

If the *wh*-clause can best be paraphrased as a direct question with minor adjustments, then we have an embedded indirect question.

Special ESL/EFL Issues with Indirect Questions

ESL/EFL students often have trouble with the form of indirect questions. Common errors include the following:

1. The embedded clause is produced without a *whether* or *if* complementizer and with direct-question word order:

***My friend asked me did I really believe that.**

***Can you tell me is this the right way to go?**

There is some irony in this type of learner error. Students typically have some initial difficulty producing properly inverted direct questions, producing instead normal declarative word order. Once the proper order is mastered, many students then understandably tend to overgeneralize inversion to indirect questions, where inversion produces ungrammatical results!

2. In some languages, two adjacent complementizers may occur in embedded *yes/no* questions, resulting in the following type of cross-linguistic influence:

***My friend asked me whether that I really believed the story.**

3. Also in some languages, but not in English, a complementizer may co-occur with a *wh*-question.

***The woman asked us that how we could fix the flat tire.**

***She wants to know that when would be a good time to visit you.**

Learners should be aware that double complementizers are never used in English.

OTHER METHODS OF ATTRIBUTION

So far, most of this chapter has covered the use of main-clause verbs to perform attributions in complement clause constructions. It should not, however, be assumed that reported speech and writing need always be marked in this way. Other forms include reporting nouns, prepositional phrases, and, in informal speech, introductory expressions such as *be like* and *go*. In addition, in conversation and monologic narratives, speakers may use intonation and other cues (that is, zero-quotatives) rather than lexical or grammatical markers to signal reported speech. We will discuss each of these briefly in the sections that follow.

Reporting Nouns

Many of the verbs used for reporting have related noun forms which can also serve as reporting devices, e.g., *argue/argument, believe/belief, recommend/recommendation, warn/warning*. And of course some verb/noun pairs, such as *claim/claim*, have the same form. Thompson (1994) provides a substantial list of reporting nouns. To give one example, the content of the following clause may be incorporated into a corresponding noun phrase (pp. 115ff):

Smith believed that school budgets should not be cut.

... Smith's belief that school budgets should not be cut ...

The following sentences with reporting nouns modified by *that*-clauses are from COCA:

[He] reneged on his promise that all votes would be counted. (Fund, 2004)

While Foss's claim that the [bicycle inner] tube is lighter than the norm didn't bear out ... (Allyn, 2012)

The examples above report on the speech acts of a specific individual and a company, respectively. However, often a reporting noun occurs without a possessive determiner, but instead with a determiner like *the* or *this*; as such, it reports a commonly expressed opinion or repeated claim rather than the speech or thought of a specific individual:

[T]he act of dividing students up reinforces the belief that boys and girls are different.
(Wood, 2012)

And what I couldn't get out of my head was this claim that tomatoes could be engineered for precise tastes. (Schonwald, 2012)

Prepositional Phrases

There are also a number of conventional ways that prepositional phrases are used in reporting others' thoughts and words. The most common is probably the phrase *according to X*; others include *in the opinion/view/perspective of X*, *from X's perspective*, and so on. Here are a few examples from COCA:

In the opinion of the panel, acquiring these [foundational] skills will be necessary for future achievement. (Fuchs et al., 2012)

We did acknowledge that, from the perspective of this committee, the fact that chimpanzees are very close to humans gives them a different status. (PBS NewsHour, May, 2012)

Informal Speech Forms: Go, Be All, and Be Like

In reporting speech and thoughts, writers and speakers may use a variety of other forms. Three expressions current especially among younger speakers, but growing in informal usage, are the verb *go* and the predicates *be all* and *be like*.

McCarthy (1998) offers an extended example from the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) of a speaker repeatedly using past tense *go* as a reporting verb, an excerpt of which is reproduced here (p. 165):

I can remember getting to the customs in America and this guy went where are you staying ... I went with my friend [speaker is interrupted by another speaker]

The expression *be all* may introduce the speaker's words as reported to another

If I go to an event and someone says, "Would you like to put your bag down?"

"I'm all, "No, thanks!" (Seidman, Confessions of a Bag Lady, *Good Housekeeping*, 2012)

or may mark speech heard by the reporter as in the following example with *be like* and *be all*:

"And I'm like, 'Didn't you get my messages?' And he 's all, 'What messages?'" (Riley, 2008)

As the example above illustrates, *be like* in the first clause serves a similar purpose of signaling speech. Durham et al. (2012) note that recent studies document the swiftness with which this expression has spread across age groups. They also summarize recent research investigating linguistic and social changes in the constraints on *be like* use in English dominant countries such as the U.K., Canada, and the U.S. For example, some studies indicate that women tend to be more creative than men in their use of *be like*; others indicate that, in the spread of *be like* globally, some of the social meanings related

to its use do not always accompany it, but instead speakers incorporate *be like* usage in their speech contexts in innovative ways.

In summary, all three of these quotative forms appear to be increasing in acceptance and frequency of usage in informal speech. And, as the following example from a television talk show (COCA) illustrates, sometimes speakers manage to combine all three, i.e., *be all*, *be like* and *go!*

Oh, when [we're] back stage, you should see these guys moving around. They're all like, and I'm like going, okay, I better get it together fast here. [ABC GMA 2012 (COCA 120228)]

Free Indirect Discourse and Zero Quotatives

There are yet other options for citation, one of which has been referred to as *free indirect discourse* (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983). Here, the identity of the reporting author often seems to phase into the identity of the person reported on, thereby producing what seems closer to direct than to indirect speech. Often, what is reported in this way are thoughts:

Little Red Riding Hood objected to her mother's advice. Why should she always take the same path to Gran[d]ma's? She might see something different if she could cut through the woods. (Yule, Mathis, & HopKins, 1992, p. 247)

The second and third sentences cannot be direct quotations given the use of the third person pronoun *she*.

Given appropriate discourse contexts and adequate contrast and texture in voice quality (Yule, 1995), even entire dialogues can be represented without conventional markers of speaker-change, as in the following text with two zero-quotatives which also makes use of the expression *be like* in the context of a speaker's conversation with her mother:

She's like, "So what time did you get in?" "We got in at two-thirty." "Well I got home a little after one"... (Yule, Mathis, & HopKins, 1992, p. 249)

Yule, Mathis, and HopKins note that everyday reporting in conversation is full of such devices unlikely to be found in textbooks and that ESL/EFL students ought to be made aware of them not necessarily to produce them but to avoid misunderstanding them when they encounter such reporting strategies in everyday conversation.

The Meaning of Reporting Devices

THE COMPLEMENTS OF REPORTING VERBS

As should be obvious by now, verbs used for reporting do not all share identical complement types. Verbs like *say* require tensed *that*-clause complements, verbs like *wonder* take question complements (i.e., both *yes/no* and *wh-*), verbs like *order* take infinitives, and others take tenseless subjunctive clauses. While some of these verbs could also be cross-listed in the lexicon for either one type of complement or another with virtually the same meaning, with other verbs, meaning will change depending on the complement chosen. Complements to the verb *insist* can be either ordinary declarative or subjunctive, with a marked difference in meaning:

Jack insists that we have visited that place.

Jack insists that we visit that place.

In the first example, Jack expresses his certainty that we have been at that place before, while in the second, he strongly recommends our visiting that place at some time in the future.

The verb *ask* can accompany either subjunctives or interrogatives, again with a meaning change:

The conductor asked that we give him our tickets. (*asked* = *requested*)

The conductor asked us where we were going. (*asked* = *queried*)

Then, too, many verbs used in reporting such as *remember*, *forget*, *see*, and *know* do not change their meaning when negated, but there may be a change in the presumed factual status of the complement depending on which complementizer is chosen:

They remembered/knew that those birds flew south in the fall.

a. They did not remember/know that those birds flew south in the fall.

b. They did not remember/know whether those birds flew south in the fall.

In example (a), it is still presumed true that the birds fly south in fall. In example (b), it does not necessarily hold true; in this case, the presupposition ceases to hold.

Finally, some reporting verbs with complements require either direct or indirect objects, some cannot take them, and some take them optionally. A few examples are listed below:

No indirect object: *agree*, *realize*, *conclude*, *think*, *believe*, *say*, *prove*, *wonder*

I agreed (*him) that it was true.

They said (*him) that it was time to go.

Obligatory indirect object: *tell*, *assure*, *convince*, *persuade*, *remind*, *inform*, *warn*

She informed us that it was a one-way street.

The speaker convinced the audience that humpback whales should remain on the endangered species list.

Optional indirect object: *show*, *promise*, *ask*

The presenters showed (us) what the results would be.

He promised (me) not to be late.

This is information that students will have to learn one verb at a time; since there does not seem to be any reason for why a verb like *inform* must take an overt indirect object, teachers should expect to see errors in this area even at advanced stages of learning.

Choice of *If* versus *Whether*

Many traditional grammarians claim that the difference between *if* and *whether* is one of register, *whether* being used when a more formal register is desired. This observation, however, does not give us the whole picture.

Bolinger (1975) has suggested that there is a difference between these two complementizers in that *if* marks true *yes/no* questions, whereas *whether* implies the existence of alternatives. Although this distinction is subtle, it may be true that *whether* would be more frequently selected in situations where the listener is being asked to make a choice:

Margaret: Do you prefer Mexican or Greek food?

Margaret asked whether I preferred Mexican or Greek food.

Further support for Bolinger's hypothesis might be the fact that only *whether* can be immediately followed by *or not*:

I wondered $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{whether} \\ *if \end{array} \right\}$ or not Helen was coming.

The complementizer *if*, however, may also be followed by *or not*, provided that there is a short clause intervening:

I wondered if Helen was coming or not.

A co-occurrence restriction that always distinguishes between *if* and *whether* is that only *whether* can occur after prepositions or participial *-ing* forms functioning like prepositions:

I inquired as to $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{whether} \\ *if \end{array} \right\}$ there were any new developments.

We asked them regarding $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{whether} \\ *if \end{array} \right\}$ there were any new developments.

In a data-based study of *if* vs. *whether* as complementizers of reported *yes/no* questions in written English discourse, Ssensalo (1991) found that usage was genre sensitive. College textbooks and professional journals strongly preferred *whether* (91 percent), newspapers had a modest preference for *whether* (63 percent), and children's literature tended to use *if* (67 percent). Among the frequently occurring main verbs that preferred *if* were *ask*, *see*, and *wonder*; the most frequent verbs preceding *whether* were *decide*, *question*, *determine*, and *know*. Ssensalo concluded that verbs of interrogation tended to select *if* whereas verbs of mental activity tended to select *whether*; a main verb's semantic category was more influential in complementizer choice than the genre in which it occurred, accounting for the selection of *if* or *whether* twice as often as the genre.

Further research is needed to determine whether the same trends obtain in oral discourse.

THE MEANINGS AND FUNCTIONS OF REPORTING VERBS

The distinction between reporting verbs and other verbs depends largely on the ways in which they are used rather than on inherent verbal semantics. As an illustration of the importance of context for these verbs, consider the following examples:

1. (a) Our teaching assistant **explains** statistics well.
(b) Our teaching assistant **explained** the difference between mean, median, and mode in class today.
2. (a) My brother **has neglected** to maintain his car.
(b) In their article, the authors **have neglected** to account for data that conflicted with their results.

In each of the two sentence pairs, a reporting verb occurs only in sentence (b). The verb *explain* in sentence 1(a) introduces a claim about the teaching assistant's general ability; 1(b) reports on a speech event. Likewise, the verb *neglect* in 2(a) reports on an activity (or more precisely, the lack of it), whereas in 2(b), *neglect* reports on what the writer believes is an omission in a research article.

English has a large number of verbs that can be used to mark reported utterances, and, as we will see, these verbs have been categorized in a variety of ways, both semantically and functionally. Most of the reporting verbs, however, appear primarily in written or formal speech contexts rather than in conversation. Like other grammatical constructions in which only a few lexical items account for the majority of uses in conversation (e.g., as noted in Chapter 26 regarding the use of *and* and *so* for logical connectors), only a small group of reporting verbs, including *say*, *tell*, *know*, *ask*, *think*, and *wonder*, tend to be used for informal reported speech or thought.

McCarthy (1998) underscores the difference between speech and writing in the lexical variety of reported verbs by comparing two narrative extracts of 300–400 words, one from written fiction and the other from a spoken story. The shorter fiction text contained eight

different reporting verbs, including three occurrence of *exclaimed* and several verbs with modification such as *replied shuddering*, while the spoken text used only two lexical verbs: *say* and *ask*, with *said* used 29 times (p. 155) Even without reference to data analyses, we know from everyday experience that reporting verbs such as *allege*, *assert*, *contend*, *determine*, or *point out*, just to give a few examples, are not frequently used in conversation and informal oral narrative contexts. As previously discussed, there are a number of ways that speakers signal reported speech and thought to their listeners that do not include reporting verbs.

In written registers, reporting the words and thoughts of others can also be marked in ways other than the use of reporting verbs, such as the use of reporting nouns, as we described earlier. However, in contrast to informal spoken English, a great number of reporting verbs occur in written English, especially in academic genres, but also in fiction and journalism. During the last several decades, genre analyses and corpus-based studies across academic disciplines have offered a number of classifications of reporting verbs from semantic and functional perspectives. For example, Thompson and Ye (1991) examined verbs reflecting both writer (reporter) and author (source text) processes. Their analysis of journal article introductions across disciplines looked at the interactions between the denotation of reporting verbs and their evaluative possibilities using an elaborate classification scheme. Their denotation categories identified authors' textual, mental, and research processes (e.g., *state*, *think*, and *measure* respectively) as well as writers' acts of comparing (e.g., *correspond to*) and theorizing (e.g., *account for*). Their evaluative categories distinguished various types of writer and author *stance*, that is, both the writer's attitude toward the information reported (e.g., *demonstrate*) and the author's attitude toward the text's information as reported by the writer (e.g., *emphasize*). Hyland (2000) adapted and simplified the taxonomy created by Thompson and Ye for his investigation of citation practices across academic disciplines. The following chart summarizes his categories for the denotation of reporting verbs, that is, those that describe reported speech or writing activities.

DENOTATION OF REPORTING VERBS

| <i>Research Acts</i> | | <i>Cognition Acts</i> | <i>Discourse Acts</i> |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| procedures | findings | believe | argue |
| analyze | discover | consider | discuss |
| calculate | notice | think | propose |
| explore | show | view | state |

Adapted from Hyland, 2000, pp. 349–350

Hyland (2000) also simplified Thompson and Ye's (1991) evaluative taxonomy; again, a summary is presented here:

EVALUATIVE MEANINGS OF REPORTING VERBS

| <i>Writer's stance toward reported information</i> | <i>Factive (writer acceptance)</i> | <i>Counter-Factive (writer disagreement)</i> | <i>No clear signal</i> |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| The authors... | acknowledge point out establish | exaggerate fail ignore overlook | believe examine generalize ⁶ |

| <i>Writer's expression of the author's stance</i> | <i>Authors as Positive</i> | <i>Authors as Neutral</i> | <i>Authors as Tentative</i> | <i>Authors as Critical</i> |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| The authors... | advocate argue hold | address cite comment | believe hypothesize suggest | attack condemn object |

Adapted from Hyland, 2000, p. 350

As these classifications of reporting verbs indicate, selecting verbs in order to describe reported processes, to express one's attitude toward the reported information and to express authors' views toward the reported information is a complex task, both linguistically and rhetorically. No wonder that ESL/EFL writers, even at the advanced levels, tend to rely heavily on "simple" verbs such as *say*, *think*, or *show* to indicate what another speaker or author has said! The taxonomies that researchers have created to account for all instances of reporting verbs in written texts would be overly complex for learners, but they can be drawn on for instruction that focus on different aspects of the meanings of reporting using simpler categories. For example, Frodesen and Wald (2015) ask students to rank the strength of claims of specific reporting verbs (e.g., *argue* versus *state* versus *suggest*) and to make binary distinctions between "saying" verbs (e.g., *claim*, *remark*, *state*) versus "doing" verbs (e.g., *describe*, *examine*, *present*) in research reports from COCA.

Given the dependence of reporting verbs on context for meaning, it is important that academic writing instruction include authentic texts from genres and disciplines appropriate to students' levels and instructional goals, as well as practice in using reporting verbs with subsequent corrective feedback. Advanced level students writing within specific disciplines can be encouraged to compile their own corpora of sample texts to familiarize themselves with the kinds of reporting verbs commonly used in their fields or to check discipline-specific use of reporting verbs in the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE). On the other hand, it is worth considering that even in fields such as engineering, where the range of reporting verbs in research writing may be fairly limited relative to the numerous choices available, students in these disciplines presumably also read and listen to formal speech in areas of interest beyond their academic fields, thus encountering a greater variety of reporting verbs than they might come across in their academic reading.

Simple Declarative Reporting Verbs

There are a host of possible verbs with which to mark reported utterances. Quirk et al. (1985) list over 150 of them, many of which overlap in meaning. They divide these into several categories, including those they call "public" and "private" types—that is, those in which the person reported on has actually said or written something publicly observable—and those in which only an inner "intellectual state" is reported (p. 1181). For ESL/EFL teachers, of greater importance may be the distinction mentioned in Chapter 32 on complementation, which we revisit now: the factive/nonfactive distinction. Listed below are some of the more common factive/nonfactive reporting verbs and a capsule description of their relative complexity. We might adopt Quirk et al.'s feature [public] as basic and develop further features in the manner below, taking the verb *believe* as an understood primitive:

| <i>Nonfactive</i> | <i>Factive</i> |
|---|---|
| believe | know, be aware = [<i>believe</i> + FACT] |
| say, assert = [<i>believe</i> + public] | reveal, show, point out = [<i>know</i> + public] |
| claim = [<i>say</i> + nonobvious] | prove, demonstrate = [<i>show</i> + reasons] |
| argue = [<i>claim</i> + reasons] | realize, notice = [come to <i>know</i>] |
| assume = [<i>believe</i> + no reasons] | discover = [<i>realize</i> + nonobvious] |
| suspect = [<i>believe</i> + doubt] | |
| suggest = [<i>say</i> + doubt] | |
| be certain = [<i>believe</i> + no doubt] | |

Students may be surprised to hear that *to be certain* about something says nothing definitive about the actual truth-value of the proposition that one is certain about; it merely reflects a person's cognitive state. Some verbs, such as *explain* or *understand*, may be somewhat more ambiguous with regard to the factive-nonfactive distinction.

understand

factive: **He understood (the fact) that $4^2 = 16$.**

($4^2 = 16$ even if one questions or negates the higher verb.)

nonfactive: **The children understood that their uncle would come later.**

(i.e., Their understanding could be misguided or inaccurate.)

However, there is a decisive difference in such a large majority of cases that the distinction is worth noting. Other verbs may be somewhat more difficult to present in terms of simple features. (For instance, to *mention* something is to *say* it, but the two verbs are not completely interchangeable.)

Emotional-State Reporting Verbs

There is a subclass of declarative reporting verbs that reveal not only a cognitive but also an affective state. These include verbs such as *complain*, *exclaim*, *rejoice*, *lament*; if we represent these verbs as well with semantic features, we might do so as follows:

complain = [*say* + annoyance]

exclaim = [*say* + surprise]

rejoice = [*say* + joyfulness]

lament = [*say* + sadness]

Interrogative Reporting Verbs

The factive/nonfactive distinction does not seem to apply when the truth of a proposition is being questioned. However, some of the same other distinctions mentioned do apply. For example, to *wonder* seems to differ from to *ask* in the feature [public]:

wonder = [not know] + [desire to know]

ask = [not know] + [desire to know] + [public]

One can “wonder” without making public one's wonder, but “asking” seems to imply a “public” wonder.

ESL/EFL writers, even at the advanced levels, tend to rely heavily on “simple” verbs such as *say* and *think* to indicate what another speaker or author has said. This may reflect

a certain reluctance to use verbs with more complex semantic features whose informational content is more precise. Indeed, such verbs may prove difficult to use in a nativelike way, and there may not always be equivalents in students' native languages.

Uses of Reported Speech and Writing

We will begin this section with uses of reported speech in spoken contexts, first in informal contexts of conversation and narrative, followed by uses in more formal spoken contexts. We then turn to citation practices in academic writing, in particular looking at the differences that have been identified across disciplines and what they reveal in terms of the disciplinary beliefs about knowledge making and reporting.

USES OF REPORTED SPEECH IN NARRATIVES AND CONVERSATION

Suggesting Authenticity of Past Event

Many examples of reported speech in conversational English serve to develop narratives, often stories in which the speaker is one of the participants. McCarthy (1998) found that the great majority of speech reports he examined in narratives from the CANCODE corpus consisted of indirect speech introduced by past tense reporting verb *said* or historical present *says*. He speculates that speakers use such speech patterns along with discourse markers like *well* and *oh* (e.g., *so she said well go in the queue then she said and find out what's happening*) in order to create the illusion that the story is a faithful rendition of what actually took place (p. 161).

Providing Evidence

Reported speech is commonly used to provide evidence in conversational interactions. Holt's (1996) analyses of dialogues shows how reported speech may offer evidence for a previous comment, sometimes to counter another speaker's claim. The following example of a telephone conversation between two sisters, adapted from one of Holt's transcripts, illustrates this use:

Lesley: Mum seems to be getting confused. She called me Vanna.

Vanna: No, she said would you like to talk to Vanna.

To counter her sister's claim that their mother mistakenly called her by the wrong name, the second speaker uses reported speech by her mother.

Clift (2006, 2007) has looked at the uses of reported speech in conversations that do not involve extended narratives. She explores how reported speech in dialogues signals the source of information on which a claim is based. The example below summarizes a multiple turn exchange between two friends in Clift's conversational data:

Jenny: Your son Bill and his wife have such a lovely family; all they need now is a little girl.

Vera: Well, Bill said they have enough kids as it is.

In responding to her friend's comment, Vera offers something her son had said as an assessment of the situation rather than stating her own opinion.

An awareness of some of the common pragmatic functions of reported speech in social interactions can help English learners better understand their meanings both in actual conversational settings and narrative fiction.

Politeness

Finally, we may note that verbs reporting the speaker's thoughts are often used to express politeness in conversational indirect questions. The *Collins COBUILD English Grammar* (Sinclair & Fox, 1990, p. 330) mentions expressions like,

I wonder if I could ask you a question.

Don't you think we'd better wait and see?

I don't suppose you could stay an hour or two longer.

as a means of softening an utterance which might otherwise sound too direct, as in

Could I ask you a question?

We'd better wait and see.

Could you stay an hour or two longer?

USES OF REPORTED SPEECH IN OTHER INTERACTIONAL CONTEXTS

Less attention has been given to analysis of the functions of reported speech in oral discourse other than conversation or monologic narratives. In one study, however, Meyers (1999) offers a taxonomy of reported speech functions in focus group discussions that he believes could be used as a starting place to investigate other types of group discussions. Meyers notes that reported speech in these contexts is almost always presented as a direct enactment without reporting verbs. For example, in one discussion, a speaker describing a corporation's failure to appropriately protect laborers in a developing country from injury in an industrial disaster uses the phrase "It didn't matter, did it..." to reflect the corporation's attitude. Although the speaker doesn't explicitly attribute the comment to the company, from the context and the speaker's intonation, the listeners can be counted on to interpret the utterance as reported speech and not the speaker's opinion. In addition, commentary often both precedes and follows the instances of reported speech, sometimes by the speaker and at other times by other participants. An implication of this and other interactional studies for learners, Meyers argues, is that lessons in reported speech should start not with forms but functions, i.e., not with questions about which tense or pronoun to use but rather with questions about why it is that people use these forms.

USES IN ACADEMIC WRITING: DISCIPLINARY DIFFERENCES IN CITATION PRACTICES

Just as Meyers (1999), in examining focus group discussions, raises questions about why people use reporting forms in more formal spoken interactions, research on reporting in academic writing contexts has increasingly investigated such writing as instances of social activities deeply embedded in dynamic disciplinary and cultural contexts. In the past, ESL/EFL instructors might rely on composition handbooks to provide what seemed to be uniform and relatively unchanging "rules" of citation, from the mechanics of reporting sources, to questions of when and how to use quotations, to the do's and don't's of paraphrasing others' words. It appeared that the primary differences across disciplines resided with mechanical conventions as reflected in style manuals, such as those of the APA or MLA. However, more recent corpus-based studies of written texts have revealed that writers across academic disciplines vary in much more significant ways in their citation practices. Similarly, studies eliciting students' and teachers' judgments of

what counts as acceptable and appropriate citation practices have indicated there is far from uniform agreement about these matters.

We have previously summarized Hyland's (1999) taxonomy of reporting verbs for academic citations, created as part of his analysis of citation practices in 80 journal research articles representing eight disciplines, including ones from the sciences (molecular biology, electronic engineering, physics, mechanical engineering), social sciences (sociology, marketing) and humanities (applied linguistics, philosophy).

In addition to text analysis, Hyland (1999) consulted with specialists in each of these fields. He found distinct differences across disciplines, including citation frequency and the ways in which they referenced sources, especially in comparing what he termed the "soft disciplines" (those in social sciences and humanities) and the "hard disciplines" (science and engineering). Methods of citation distinguished between non-integral citations, which do not explicitly mention the author and are often represented by numbers, either in-text or following the reported writing,

However, as has been analysed in a recent paper [17] dealing with the spin-spin...

and integral citations in which the author is explicitly mentioned and thus given greater emphasis than otherwise.

Sherin (1990) argues that police agencies establish triage systems whereby...

Hyland also classified citations according to whether they were quotations, summaries, or generalizations from more than one source and categorized the main verbs associated with the authors of the articles.

Among Hyland's (1999) main findings were the following:

1. The soft disciplines tended to use citations more frequently, with sociology citing most often. In the hard disciplines, physics had the fewest citations.
2. The humanities and social sciences tended to use integral citations more than the sciences, but the differences between the disciplines were for the most part not great; more than two thirds of citations were non-integral. The striking exception was philosophy with over two-thirds integral citations. Hyland accounts for this difference by observing that articles in philosophy often feature arguments between writers other than the reporting author.
3. The great majority of citations in all disciplines fell into the category of summary (ranging from 72 percent in biology to 89 percent in philosophy); most others were classified as generalizations; few citations (3–13 percent) were quotations, including block quotations.
4. There were clear disciplinary differences in the use of specific reporting verbs for citation. For example, almost all of the uses of Cognition verbs *say* and *think* occurred in philosophy; most uses of Research-type verbs *report* and *describe* were found in science and engineering articles; social science and humanities articles accounted for the majority of uses of Discourse act verbs *argue*, *suggest*, and *study*; and applied linguists contributed over half of all instances of the verb *examine*.

From these and other findings, Hyland (1999) concludes that writers in the humanities and social sciences tend to recognize the authors of cited information both more frequently and more explicitly through integral citations (often putting authors into the subject position), quotations, and a variety of reporting verbs that express an author's stance. Extensive references in the "soft disciplines" tended to reflect broader historical and topical connections to the subject at hand. In contrast, writers in the sciences typically downplayed the authors of

reported discourse through non-integral citations as illustrated above; further, their citations tended to be closely related to the specific research being presented and assumed a high level of shared knowledge by readers. In short, Hyland claims these findings reflect important differences among disciplines in the ways in which they view the roles of individuals in constructing knowledge. As he explains in part: “Articles in the hard sciences still suggest that knowledge is accomplished by the correct application of prescribed procedures...in this perspective, human judgment as a mediating link in the interpretation of data is downplayed” (p. 355). What a long way such interpretations take us from the “cut and dried” rules of the style manuals!

DIRECT QUOTATION VERSUS PARAPHRASING

As for the use of direct quotations versus paraphrasing in reported writing, typically, in academic writing instruction, student writers are advised to use quotations sparingly and only for specific purposes. For example, here are guidelines for when to use quotations from a widely used handbook for college-level writers (Hacker & Sommers, 2010):

- When language is especially vivid or expressive
- When exact wording is needed for technical accuracy
- When it is important to let the debaters of an issue explain their positions in their own words
- When the words of an authority lend weight to an argument
- When the language of a source is the topic of your discussion (as in an analysis or interpretation)

These guidelines are followed by the recommendation to avoid excessive quotation, adding “it is almost impossible to integrate numerous quotations smoothly into your text” (Hacker & Sommers, 2010, p. 632).

The articles in Hyland’s (1999) corpus certainly reflect the sparing use of quotation for reporting, with very low frequencies of quotations relative to other types. However, current research suggests that general guidelines need to be considered carefully in light of writing goals and contexts. In an analysis of direct quotations in MA theses written by students from Central and Eastern Europe in an English medium university, Petrić (2012) found that high-rated theses had close to three times as many direct quotations per 1000 words as the low-rated theses. Perhaps most important were the differences between the two groups in the kinds of direct quotations. High-rated theses used mainly quotation fragments, sometimes strings of only two or three words, integrating the quotes into the writers’ sentences and modifying when needed; in contrast, in the lower-rated theses, quotations were primarily clause-based and without any modification by the writer.

We turn now from text analyses of reported writing to look at studies that have elicited instructors’ and students’ evaluations of reporting practices such as paraphrase, providing yet further evidence of the complexity of referencing sources and the challenges for teachers of ESL/EFL students in this area. As part of a larger project on reporting source texts in academic writing, Shi (2012) explored the extent to which student writers and professors in a North American university agreed on the acceptability of paraphrased, summarized, and translated texts in four samples of L2 student writing.

Shi’s (2012) inclusion of translated texts is interesting since there has been little research in this area of reported writing; here, however, we will focus on responses to the paraphrased texts since the use of paraphrasing plays such an important role in academic writing pedagogy. From responses of 48 native and nonnative English speaking students

(20 undergraduates and 28 graduates) and 27 instructors (mostly native English speakers), Shi found more differences across disciplines than between students and faculty in their opinions about the acceptability of citation practices in the sample texts. In general, interviewees in the sciences and applied sciences were more accepting of close paraphrases in which strings of words had been copied without quotation; these participants commented that they focused more on the ideas than exact wording and tended to feel it didn't matter whether the words were changed. Students and professors in the arts and social sciences, in contrast, for the most part found the closely paraphrased texts less acceptable and in some cases bordering on plagiarism.

In summarizing the participants' comments on the paraphrase samples, Shi (2012) states they offer a definition of good paraphrasing as "balancing between a rigorous use of citations and a readable text with an integration of others' words and ideas with those of one's own" (p. 142). At the same time, Shi emphasizes that these characteristics of good paraphrasing can be interpreted variously depending on a variety of disciplinary differences. These include the accepted citation conventions, expectations of expert level knowledge, and inferential thinking in content areas. They also involve the rhetorical purposes for using citations in a particular context. Shi's interview data further documents nonnative students' struggles to paraphrase effectively in order to avoid plagiarism, indicating that this is an area deserving of much attention in academic writing instruction for students. While students in Shi's study could recognize that one paraphrase was much too close to original wording, unlike the instructors, they were often unable to suggest how to improve it. These and similar studies remind us that paraphrasing is a complex process, one that is especially challenging for second language writers and requires extensive practice and feedback. Although students may understand the need to use "their own words," they may lack the linguistic skills to do so; thus problems with inappropriate textual borrowing are often not intentional plagiarism. Writing instructors will need to help ESL/EFL students not only to learn principles for effective paraphrasing but to develop the grammatical and lexical resources to implement them.

Other Issues of Use In Reporting

PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF *THAT* WITH *SAID*

In Chapter 31 we discussed the presence or absence of the complementizer *that* with respect to all verbs taking *that* complements. Here we restrict our observations to the co-occurrence of *that* with reporting verbs *say* and *think* in spoken and written American English.

Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) found that omission of *that* is very frequent in conversation, fiction, and news registers when *think* or *say* is the main verb. They also noted that *that* was more often omitted when subjects in the main clause and *that* clause were co-referential (pp 680–681). Here are several examples of this pattern in MICASE and magazine articles from COCA:

I said I'd be willing to do it... (MICASE Transcript OFC285SG135)

He said he's gonna be in Germany in May... (MICASE Transcript SGR999SU146)

Until that moment, I thought I knew how to be quiet around wildlife. (*Backpacker*, January 2012)

It was so hot you thought you were going to die. (*Washington Post*, April 2012)

Does any variable favor the retention of *that*? Huang (1993), in a study of *said* + *that*-clauses in written English, found that when an adverb intervened between the verb *said* and the complement clause, *that* was retained 65 percent of the time. The following examples from COCA illustrate this pattern.

He said earlier that one of the planes had fired the first shot. (*Associated Press*, 2011)

I said before that there's just 25 guys in [the clubhouse]. (*Sporting News*, August 2010)

VERB TENSE USAGE WITH REPORTING VERBS

While much has been said about the sequence of tenses in complex sentences when a main verb occurs in a past tense, we have said nothing about how speakers and writers choose between present and past tense in main clauses—i.e., *Smith says X* versus *Smith said X*. This is an issue that arises frequently in instruction for advanced level ESL/EFL students just as it often does for native English writers.

Vividness

One criterion mentioned by Thompson (1994) that bears on tense choice is the desire to achieve a “vividness effect” (pp. 110ff), a desire mentioned in Chapters 7 and 9 in connection with historical present tense in general. The difference in effect can be seen below:

The newspaper said the shop windows downtown are/were all decorated for the holidays.

The newspaper says the shop windows downtown are all decorated for the holidays.

The choice of present tense in the second sentence may reflect the speaker’s sense of immediacy and vividness.

Present Relevance

Another criterion mentioned by Thompson (1994) has already been noted in connection with a condition where sequence-of-tenses can be overridden: the case in which the reporter wishes to emphasize that a statement is still true or somehow of present relevance. Thompson offers the following as examples:

The shopkeeper says he won’t be able to carry on if the population drops any further.

It helps that your friend’s handy with a pistol. She tells me that she actually got in some target practice in the woods yesterday morning.

Presumably the shopkeeper and the friend, if asked, would repeat the same statements at the time that the reporting occurs.

Speaker/Writer Stance

Indirectly related to the notion of “present relevance” is the idea that speakers/writers may convey personal stance with regard to a reported proposition through the choice of verb tense. Batstone (1995) illustrates this with the following invented quotation:

Smith (1980) argued that Britain was no longer a country in which freedom of speech was seriously maintained. Johnson (1983), though, argues that Britain remains a citadel of individual liberty.

Although the writer of the passage may be writing for many years after both quotations were made, he/she has chosen to cast the 1980 report in the past tense and the 1983 quote in the present. While it is not impossible to argue that a writer might make these choices in order to emphasize time sequence, Batstone interprets the tense distinction as a means for the writer to show “subjective distribution of approval and disapproval” (1995, p. 198); in effect,

the writer juxtaposes the two tenses to indicate personal agreement with the idea in the 1983 quotation. While Batstone does not support his claim with a corpus of evidence, it seems likely that the choice of tense often does convey stance in the way described.

Managing Conversational Topics

In his investigation of speech reporting in the CANCODE corpus, McCarthy (1998) proposes that among the strategies speakers use to control or manage topics is their choice of reporting verb tense. He found that speakers typically use present tense *I/you say* expressions, often preceded by the conjunction *but* to summarize a topic. For example, one speaker, in concluding a conversation segment about building a garden pond with his wife, concludes (p. 168),

But as I say, we did it ourselves.

In other contexts, the present tense verb may signal a shift to another topic. In contrast, McCarthy found that the past continuous tense used with a reporting verb *was/were saying* often marks a return to an earlier point in the conversation in order to further develop a topic rather than to summarize it (p. 170):

Back to what I was saying before a bit ...

McCarthy comments that although the reporting verb *was/were saying* is frequent in conversation, the past progressive tense is rarely mentioned in discussions of verb tenses used in main clauses for reported speech and deserves more attention.

Published Sources

The question of which verb tenses to use for citations when writing for publication, especially in research reviews of the literature, is one raised frequently by ESL/EFL students in graduate programs. In providing a guide that responds to this issue, Feak and Swales (2009) state that according to several studies, one of three major patterns can account for at least two-thirds of all citing statements. Here we offer illustrations from COCA for each of these patterns, along with Feak and Swales' description of the use of each of the three patterns (p. 52):

1. Past—Reference to a Single Study (often an integral reference to researcher activity of findings)
For example, in 2009, Sheng et al. examined major blacklists and browser tools...
(Hong, 2012)
Older and younger adult reading speeds and error rates for different font types (which varied in legibility) were examined by Smither and Braun (1994). (Gasser et al., 2005)
2. Present Perfect—Reference to an Area of Inquiry (generally non-integral citations)
In more recent studies, the ontogeny of root systems has been investigated ...
Functional properties have been used to define different categories of roots. (Ghestem et al., 2011)
In addition, there have been studies focusing on systematic differences between [social work and nurse discharge planners]. (Holliman et al., 2003)
3. Present—Reference to Generally Accepted Knowledge of the Field
Considering the wealth of supporting literature that argues the benefits of song for language learning, the question must be asked: Why is this not common practice?
(Trinick, 2012)

Feak and Swales further note that exceptions to these patterns, which account for about a third of other citations, involve the options a writer has depending on factors of relevance to the context of the citation (p. 53). For example, as Batstone (1995) noted, when reporting on

what a researcher or group of researchers wrote or thought in a single study, a writer may use present perfect or present tense rather than past tense to signal some kind of closeness: to the writer's opinion, the writer's own research, or the current state of knowledge. Here is one from a study in 2011 reporting on another study done eleven years prior.

Huang (2000) finds that declared major, academic involvement ... and part-time work experience all significantly influence students' psychosocial development. (Lin, 2011)

Of course it is up to the reader to determine from the context what type of closeness has motivated the writer's verb tense choice. In any event, such motivations reflect the relevance and stance factors for both speech and writing that we discussed at the beginning of this section.

READER INFERENCES IN EXTENDED REPORTING

Where reporting is done in academic writing, writers must not only be careful about conveying their stance and personal commitment to the (non)factuality of statements reported on; they must also be scrupulous about making certain that readers are able to discern the difference between the reporter's assertions and those of the speaker/author reported on. For this purpose, all of the means mentioned in this chapter are at the writer's disposal. Obviously, one sure way for a writer to distance him or herself (both cognitively and affectively) from the assertions of the original source is to preface every sentence with an explicit reporting device. However, naturalistic reporting, even in more formal writing, is not always done this way. Students who are simply taught, first, that reporting is always done with reporting verbs, and second, that it is necessary to attribute the content of every sentence by naming the source explicitly, are faced with a stylistic dilemma that is impossible to escape (*The author says X ... Then the author claims Y ... And then he says Z ...*). Yet practiced writers do, in fact, manage to properly differentiate the contribution of the reporter from that of the reportee by a variety of means as we have shown in this chapter.

Conclusion

Reporting the ideas of others presents challenges to ESL/EFL students at the levels of form, meaning, and use. The strictly grammatical structures provide a challenge largely from the standpoint of selecting the proper complement type; the challenge of meaning lies mainly in the proper choice of reporting terms. By far the greatest challenge at the higher levels of instruction comes from the use to which students put these structures and terms in written work, especially in academic writing, where attention must be given to rhetorical purposes and disciplinary conventions. Clearly, students will need continued instruction and practice in these complex tasks at all class levels.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form.** For practice in backshifting tenses in reported speech, ask students to work in pairs interviewing each other about what they plan to do or want to do the following weekend. The teacher can decide how many responses should be elicited; students should take notes on their partner's responses (e.g., *Fang is going to play tennis on Saturday; Carlos wants to see the new James Bond movie*). Ask students to save the written responses for a follow-up activity the next week. For the next class after the weekend, the teacher can first

ask students what their classmates had planned or wanted to do and then find out if they in fact happened. For example:

Teacher: Carlos, what did Fang say her plans were for last weekend?

Carlos: Fang said she was going to play tennis on Saturday.

Teacher: Fang, did you play tennis?

Fang: No, it was raining on Saturday.

Teacher: Too bad; I'm sorry about that. Well, what did Carlos plan to do?

Fang: He said he wanted to see the new James Bond movie.

Teacher: Oh, that sounds like fun. Why don't you ask him if he saw it?

2. **Form.** Indirect questions of all types can be practiced as repetitions: Student A asks Student B a question, which Student B pretends not to hear. Student B asks, "I'm sorry. What did you say?" Student A then produces indirect speech ("I asked you whether/how/when . . .").
3. **Meaning.** An activity that can be used for either speaking or writing activities involves students listening to short monologues and dialogues. An especially rich source for this is StoryCorps (<http://storycorps.org>), a collection of thousands of brief interviews recorded and then preserved at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. Most recordings are around two minutes, making them very useful for classroom listening. They are indexed online according to a wide range of topics, such as discovery, romance, work, and wisdom. Many of the interviews themselves involve recorded speech or thought. As an example, here are a few excerpts from just one StoryCorps interview in which a father (JC) talks to his young son (JW) whom he and his partner adopted as a baby from Vietnam:

Excerpt 1:

JC: So what are some of your dreams?

JW: Well, I kinda wanna go to Mars and be an astronaut.

JC: What do you think it'll be like on Mars?

JW: Red.

Excerpt 2:

JW: So do you remember what was going through your head when you first saw me?

JC: I thought you were so . . . can I say beautiful, or do I have to say handsome?

JW: It doesn't matter.

JC: Well, you were both.

For less advanced students, the teacher could transcribe short excerpts for the students to read as they listen to the interview and/or structure questions for the students to answer, e.g., *What did JC ask his son and what did his son respond?* More advanced students could be asked to take notes and then summarize the interview either orally or in writing. They could also listen to several interviews on the same themes and compare them with what the speakers said.

4. **Form/Meaning/Use.** In multi-skills classrooms, one excellent activity using indirect speech involves students conducting an extended interview with a classmate and then presenting the findings orally or in writing. Students can choose topics in which each is an "expert." The topic could be a hobby or sport, an area of academic or vocational study, an aspect of the student's native culture such as a holiday custom or a method of preparing food, or a particular area of life experience (parenthood, the experience of being a refugee, the experience of living in another country, etc.). Students can be asked to take extensive notes during the interview

and, from these notes, write an essay or give a talk in which each reports on what his or her partner has related. Again, StoryCorps (<http://storycorps.org>) could prove a helpful resource for this activity as the site has a downloadable lesson plan for middle school to high school levels that aims to give students interviewing as well as story telling skills.

5. **Form/Meaning/Use.** At the high-intermediate level and above, summary writing is a good activity for ESL/EFL students to practice reported speech patterns while breaking away from a rigid pattern of making attributions at the beginning of each sentence. Students may be given a short piece to read as many times as they like. Without looking back at the text, they should then be encouraged to use a variety of devices—reporting verbs, *according to the author*-type expressions, and contextual cues—to convey the content of the piece to an audience. After finishing the summary, students may look back briefly at the text to check for accuracy.
6. **Use.** As composition handbooks advise, student writers should either quote language in a source that is “vivid or expressive” (Hacker & Sommers, 2010, p. 380) or paraphrase it. In other words, copying an author’s “vivid language” without attribution is considered by many unacceptable textual borrowing. However, ESL/EFL writers, like many native English developing writers, may need explicit instruction on what constitutes such language. One way of helping writers distinguish between ordinary language and distinctive language needing quotation or paraphrase is to give them groups of words that are roughly synonymous, only one of which would be considered vivid or expressive and ask them to identify that word. Here are some examples:

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. limited | <u>scanty</u> | insufficient |
| 2. <u>arduous</u> | hard | difficult |
| 3. <u>ecstatic</u> | happy | joyful |
| 4. ability | <u>flair</u> | skill |

Vocabulary can be adjusted to the levels of students and distinctive words could be selected from class readings. This is a good consciousness-raising exercise since often when students see the distinctive word grouped with more ordinary ones, they can easily identify it as different from the others even though in an actual writing task using sources, they might have copied it without quoting. For further vocabulary development, students can check a dictionary, thesaurus, collocation dictionary or concordancer such as COCA to see how the distinctive words have special connotations and co-occur with particular content or function words (e.g., *scanty* is often used with nouns like *evidence* or *proof*; *flair* is often followed by *for* [noun]).

7. **Use.** Students can also be asked to identify distinctive words in authentic text such as the following (with distinctive vocabulary in bold):

After years of **slogging** through her English lessons, **stumbling** over impossible pronunciations and **baffling** rules of syntax, Chae Eun came up with a better idea.

If they are asked to replace the distinctive words with their own, they should understand that this is a pre-paraphrasing activity and that paraphrase involves much more restructuring of language, not just synonym substitution—and that often a word is part of a group of words that would need to be replaced.

8. **Meaning.** To gain more familiarity with reporting verb meanings, students can be given authentic texts and asked to underline and categorize the verb types, using a taxonomy such as the one proposed by Hyland (1999), shown in this chapter. The instructor could also select verbs in the text to discuss strength of claims.

Here is one example of text with a variety of reported verbs from a survey of academic manual styles:

Some authors, such as Rose (2007), who is aiming at the mature student, give very simplistic advice, while others, particularly in discipline-specific works, provide more complex models. Storey (2004:72–82), writing for history students, distinguishes between the Analytical and Narrative essay, providing models for each; while in literature, Fabb and Durant (2005:67–76) offer several different techniques for arguing a case. . . . Macmillan and Weyes (2007a:96–97) also suggest a series of different structural approaches. . . . (Bennett, 2009, p. 46)

9. **Use.** This chapter has shown that academic disciplines vary widely in the kinds of reporting verbs used and the purposes for citations. Thus, for graduate-level writing classes, students should be examining research reports they are assigned to read that provide models for the kinds of writing in which they are engaged or hope to be. Students can be asked to select a journal article of their choice and to list and classify reporting verbs in at least a section of the article. They could consider whether their lists reflect Hyland's (1999) findings on disciplinary (or "soft discipline" versus "hard discipline") practices. As an out-of-class assignment, students could be given a summary of citation uses discussed in current research and asked to use them to identify uses in the journal article they have selected.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. *Create an original sentence in which each of the following terms is illustrated:*

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| a. reported <i>that</i> - clause | f. deictic time- adverbial shift | k. nonfactive reporting verb |
| b. indirect imperative | g. deictic place- adverbial shift | l. emotional-state reporting verb |
| c. indirect <i>wh</i> - question | h. deictic pronoun shift | m. free indirect discourse |
| d. indirect <i>yes/no</i> question | i. reporting noun | n. zero-quotative |
| e. backshifting | j. factive reporting verb | |

2. *Draw tree diagrams for the following sentences:*

- This book argues that a political shift is occurring.
- The author claims she has shown why parrots imitate humans.
- They asked if we had seen John.
- The reviewer wondered where Ann had found her evidence.

3. *Why are the following sentences unacceptable in Standard English?*

- *We were asked did we have the time?
- *The bureaucrat informed John his license to have expired.
- *The owner asked the customer to do not shop at another store.
- *They asked whether that it would be possible to do it another way.

4. *A type of error made with one intended interpretation of the following sentences is frequently found both in ESL/EFL and native writing. What is that intended interpretation, and what is the problem with the following sentences, given that intention? What is the alternative acceptable interpretation?*

***In Smith's opinion, he believes that there is no alternative to petroleum.**

***According to Smith, he says that DNA cannot account for these facts.**

Does the same problem occur in the following sentence? If not, can you suggest the reason why?

Smith says that in his opinion DNA cannot account for these facts.

5. *Explain as fully as possible the difference between the following two sentences:*

John said that he would be leaving next week.

John said that he would be leaving the next week.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

6. *Suppose that you wish to conduct a survey to determine the extent to which native speakers follow the sequence-of-tenses rule. How would you proceed in your survey?*
7. *Suppose that a student writes the following sentences in an essay. How would you explain the problems to the student?*

a. **I'm not sure can go or not.*

b. **My mother asked me that how I planned to raise my grades.*

c. **My father insisted for me to work harder.*

d. **My friend said that, "Can you please help me?"*

e. **I told to him that it wouldn't be possible now.*

8. *Suppose that a student has handed in an essay, part of which includes the following summary of an article from the newspaper. Assuming that the summary reflects honest paraphrase of the original author's words and ideas, how might you provide feedback on the student's way of presenting the summary?*

In this article, Richard Walter gives his opinion on violence in movies. He says that violence in movies is not as bad as many people think. He tells us that there are several reasons for this. The first reason that he gives is that strong emotion and tension are a part of everyday life. Then he says that famous plays since antiquity have been full of violence, and says that nobody objects to those plays. He also says that it is wrong for people to think that violence in movies causes violence in the real world, because in his opinion, movie violence is just a reflection of the real world. He does not think it is a cause of violence at all. So he tells us that he is not able to understand why people are so emotional about this issue.

9. *Locate direct quotations in five or six separate articles. Can you make any inference as to why the author of the article chose to quote rather than to paraphrase?*

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

One highly accessible source with a wealth of detail about reporting is:

Thompson, G. (1994). *Collins COBUILD English guide 5: Reporting*. London, England: Harper Collins.

Another good source that also gives a comprehensive list of reporting verbs is:

Sinclair, J., & Fox, G. (1990). *Collins COBUILD English grammar*. London, England: Collins.

Two useful papers written from a linguistic perspective—one on quotation in general, the other a cross-linguistic treatment of verbs like “say” are:

Partee, B. (1973). The syntax and semantics of quotation. In P. Kiparsky & S. Anderson (Eds.), *A Festschrift for Morris Halle* (pp. 410–418), New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Munro, P. (1987). On the transitivity of ‘say’ verbs. In P. Hopper & Thompson (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics* (Vol. 15, pp. 301–318). New York: Academic Press.

For a treatment of reported speech as part of reflexive language in general, see:

Lucy, J. A. (Ed.). (1993). *Reflexive language: Reported speech and metapragmatics*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

For treatment of tense usage and backshifting in reported indirect speech, see:

Comrie, B. (1986). Tense in indirect speech. *Folia Linguistica*, 20(3–4), 265–296.

Coulmas, F. (Ed.). (1986). *Direct and indirect speech*. Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter.

Harman, I. (1990). Teaching indirect speech: Deixis points the way. *ELT Journal*, 44(3), 230–238.

Salkie, R., & Reed, S. (1997). Time reference in reported speech. *English Language and Linguistics*, 1(2), 319–348.

For an article that classifies reporting signals beyond the traditional types of signal presented in grammar books, see:

Thompson, J. (1996). Voices in the text: Discourse perspectives on language reports. *Applied Linguistics*, 17(4), 501–530.

For another corpus-based taxonomy of reporting verbs in academic writing, see:

Bloch, J. (2010). A concordance-based study of the use of reporting verbs as rhetorical devices in academic papers. *Journal of Writing Research*, 2(2), 219–294.

Some of the linguistic devices by which writers can achieve cohesion to assist readers in making proper inferences about reporter vs. reportee are found in:

Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar* (3rd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

For a variety of approaches on techniques of reporting and shifting perspectives in natural oral discourse and literature, see:

Holt, E., & Clift, R. (Eds.). (2007). *Reporting talk: Reported speech in interaction*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Tannen, D. (1989). *Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue, and imagery in conversational discourse*. Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press.

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- Short, M. (1994). Understanding texts: Point of view. In G. Brown, K. Malmkjaer, A. Pollitt, & J. Williams (Eds.), *Language and understanding* (pp. 170–190). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

For a nontraditional view of the function of quotations, see also:

Clark, H.H., & Gehrig, G. H. (1990). Quotations as demonstrations. *Language*, 66(4) 764–805.

For an interesting discussion on the motivation for indirect speech, see:

- Pinker, S., Nowak, M. A., & Lee, J. J. (2008). The logic of indirect speech. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 105, 833–838.
- Pinker, S. (2011). Indirect speech, politeness, deniability, and relationship negotiation: Comment on Marina Terkourafi's "The Puzzle of Indirect Speech". *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(11), 2866–2868.
- Terkourafi, M. (2011). The puzzle of indirect speech. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(11), 2861–2865.
- Terkourafi, M. (2011). Why direct speech is not a natural default: Rejoinder to Steven Pinker's "Indirect Speech, Politeness, Deniability, and Relationship Negotiation". *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(11), 2869–2871.

Many high intermediate and advanced level ESL/EFL textbooks offer chapters or sections on the forms of reported speech. Three of the better sources are:

- Bland, S. K. (with Savage, A., & Meyers, P.). (2008). *Grammar sense: Advanced grammar and writing 4*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Cake, C. D. (2009). *Grammar connection: Structure though content 5*. Boston: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Thewllis, S. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 3* (4th ed.). Boston: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

A textbook offering extensive coverage of reporting verb meanings and uses in academic writing is:

Frodesen, J., & Wald, M. (2015). *Exploring options: Grammar and vocabulary for academic writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Two useful textbooks for multilingual graduate writers that include focus on language features of reported speech are:

- Feak, C., & Swales, J. (2009). *Telling a research story: Writing a literature review*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Swales, J., & Feak, C. (2012). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills* (3rd ed.). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

One article directed at ESL/EFL teachers that proposes an alternative pedagogical approach for teaching reported speech is:

Goodell, E. W. (1987). Integrating theory with practice: An alternative approach to reported speech in English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21(2) 305–325.

Endnotes

1. There is a possibility of shift in modals as in other verbs; recall from Chapter 8 that historically, modals had both present and past forms. However, the shift is somewhat less than systematic. Although *will* becomes *would* and *can* becomes *could* in a regular way, *may* becomes *might* only when *may* expresses possibility, not permission; otherwise, only *could* is possible:

"The children may (= are allowed to) go to the circus."

→ **Father said that the children could go to the circus.**

Likewise, *shall* does not become *should*, since such a shift would alter meaning considerably.

2. The immediate repetition could also be from the first person, who would then be repeating him/herself—B: *What did you say?* A: *I said we'll be having polenta for lunch.*

3. Distinctions such as those in this table arise, incidentally, not only in reported speech but also in cases in which comparison of two sequential events or states in the past or future are compared. For example:

She finally picked up the car. She had paid for it a *month* before.

She is finally picking up the car today. She paid for it a *month* ago.

They are leaving now. They will return in a *month*.

4. One can, of course, ask direct questions that contain indirect questions, such as *Who knows what will happen?* or *Who asked whether we could drive them home?* It is also possible to ask highly polite questions by phrasing them as indirect questions; see the section on use in this chapter.

5. Because *whether*, *if*, and *for all* function as complementizers and English cannot have double complementizers, it is not possible to have *for/to* infinitives in indirect questions, as for example:

***They asked whether for John or Mary to do the job.**

6. The three examples in this section of the chart were taken from Thompson and Ye (1991) since Hyland did not include examples for this category.

Degree— Comparatives and Equatives

Introduction

One of the most basic and powerful human cognitive capacities is the ability to comprehend and express the fact that two things are similar or different. Often, such a similarity or difference is expressed in terms of degree, extent, or quantity. This chapter describes the two most important English constructions used to express differences or similarities of degree or extent—that is, the comparative and equative constructions, respectively. We also briefly discuss the major ways in which the languages of the world express degree-type comparison.

From the outset, it is important that we distinguish the absolute use of adjectives and adverbs from the relative use of such words:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Absolute Use: | John is tall. John runs fast. |
| Relative Use (Comparative): | John is taller than Susan. John runs faster than Bill. |
| Relative Use (Equative): | John is as tall as Bob. John is as fast as Peter. |

There are important semantic differences in these three underlying uses. For example, if we negate a sentence with absolute use and conjoin the resulting negative statement with the affirmative absolute statement, we produce a contradiction:

***John is tall, but he isn't tall.**

A contradiction does not result, however, when we conjoin the same negative absolute assertion with the sentence containing the affirmative relative usage found in comparative and equative statements:

John is taller than Susan, but he isn't tall.
John is as tall as Bob, but he isn't tall.

The reason for this difference is that words and phrases such as *tall(er)* and *fast(er)* and phrases such as *as tall as* and *as fast as* are used in a relative sense, without making any assertion about the referent's absolute height or speed.

In this chapter, we discuss comparative and equative constructions, which involve the relative rather than the absolute use of gradable adjectives and adverbs. It is important to note, as we did in Chapter 20, that there are also nongradable adjectives and adverbs, such as *right*, *wrong*, *real*, *totally*, and so on; such adjectives and adverbs normally are not compared, or used in a relative sense (Bolinger, 1972).¹

A TYPOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF COMPARISON

There seem to be at least four different ways in which the languages of the world express comparison. We will use English words to exemplify these different construction types. For examples of these constructions in other languages, see Celce-Murcia (1972, pp. 160–167).

*Comparison by Juxtaposition*²

Some languages express comparison by mere juxtaposition of clauses and have no explicit syntactic device or construction for expressing comparison. For example:

My boat (is) big. + Your boat (is) very big. ('Your boat is bigger than mine.')

Limited Scope Comparison

Some languages, such as Chinese and Japanese, compare by limiting the scope of an adjective—or some other part of speech—so that it has a relative rather than an absolute meaning:

**{ Compare(d) (to)
From }** **Mary, John (is) tall.** ('John is taller than Mary.')

John, compare(d) to Mary, (is) tall.

“Surpass” Comparatives

Still other languages, such as many West African or Bantu languages, express comparison using a verb that means “to pass” or “to surpass”:

**John { pass
surpass }** **Mary (in) { tallness
height }** ('John is taller than Mary.')

Many languages of this type cannot directly express the reverse of such a statement—that is, *Mary is shorter than John*.³

Comparison Using Degree Morphemes

Finally, there are languages like English (i.e., most Indo-European languages) that have developed verbs, adjectives, quantifiers—words like *more* and *less*—and inflections like *-er* that use these words or morphemes to directly express comparison:

John (is) tall MORE than Mary. ('John is taller than Mary.')

**Mary (is) { short MORE
tall LESS }** **than John.** ('Mary is (shorter/less tall) than John.')

In such languages, comparisons can always be reversed, but one form is usually preferred over the other in any given discourse context for semantic and pragmatic reasons. As we shall see next, the unmarked or positive form occurs most frequently.

TYPICAL LEARNER CHALLENGES

In the preceding section, we noted that all languages have ways of expressing comparison but that the devices used can differ greatly from one language to another. Depending on the type(s) of comparison used in the native language of your students, different kinds of problems will occur, especially at the initial stage of learning. Then as students become more advanced, challenges of a different nature occur.

Here are some of the common learner errors:

1. Omission of the comparative inflection—and perhaps also the copula:

***John (is) tall than Mary.**

2. Substitution of some other function word for *than* (a) or inappropriate use of *than* (b):
 - a. *John is tall(er) from Mary.
 - b. *Paul is as tall than John.
3. Use of *more* where *-er* is required, or vice versa:

*John is $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{tall more} \\ \text{more tall} \end{array} \right\}$ than Mary. *Mary is beautifuller than Karen.
4. Use of a regular pattern where an irregular form is required:

*His handwriting is badder than mine.
5. Double marking of the comparative:

*Jim runs more faster than Paul. *This car is more better than that one.

While the first three errors may be explained in terms of cross-linguistic influence, the last two are developmental errors that young English-speaking children also produce during first language acquisition. In addition, these days we hear proficient speakers using double marking, too.

Forms of Comparison

There are a number of form-based factors, such as the range of construction types and the factors involved in choosing *more* versus *-er*; that are useful to be aware of in order to teach comparison effectively.

WHAT MAKES ENGLISH DIFFICULT?

The Range of Comparative Construction Types

Most reference grammars and ESL/EFL texts center their discussion of comparison in English exclusively on adjectives and adverbs. Actually, each major part of speech in English (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) permits comparison.

Recall that when we formulate a comparison, we presuppose a difference of degree or extent; for example:

$$X \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{is} \\ \text{has} \\ \text{other} \\ \text{verbs} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{MORE} \\ \text{LESS} \\ \text{FEWER} \end{array} \right\} A \text{ (-er) than } Y$$

(presupposes "X is different from Y with respect to A")

As the following examples illustrate, each major part of speech in English can be used with some version of this formula to make comparisons. Many languages do not have as large an inventory of comparative constructions as does English:

Adjective: **John is taller than Mary (is).**

Joe is less intelligent than Sam (is).

Adverb: **Bill runs faster than Peter ($\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{runs} \\ \text{does} \end{array} \right\}$).**

Cynthia dances less gracefully than Judy ($\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{dances} \\ \text{does} \end{array} \right\}$).

Noun: **Jack has more money than Harry ($\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{has} \\ \text{does} \end{array} \right\}$).**

Max has { fewer books } than I ({ have }).
 { less money } { do }

Verb: Paul weighs more than Alex (does).

This book costs less than that one (does).

Collectively, these examples raise a number of problems and questions, which we discuss in the following sections.

The Choice of *-Er* versus *More* with Adjectives and Adverbs

There is a metrical tendency, although it has some exceptions, based on English syllable structure that in many cases helps English speakers decide when to apply the *-er* inflection and when to use the periphrastic comparative form *more* with adjectives and adverbs. The following rules are adapted from Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin, with Griner (2010):

- First, gradable adjectives and adverbs of one syllable take the inflectional ending, as do two-syllable adjectives with a final unstressed *-y* ending:⁴

| Base Form | -er |
|--------------|----------------|
| big | bigger |
| tall | taller |
| soon | sooner |
| hard | harder |
| happy | happier |
| noisy | noisier |

- Second, many other two-syllable adjectives that have a stressed first syllable and an unstressed second syllable ending in *-ly*, *-ow*, or *-le* (syllabic [l])⁵ also take the inflection, although it is certainly possible to use the periphrastic form in certain contexts, such as when contrastive emphasis is being placed on the comparative element (*Ann is friendly, but Beth is MORE friendly.*).

| Base Form | -er | Also Possible |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| friendly | friendlier | more friendly |
| narrow | narrower | more narrow |
| gentle | gentler | more gentle |

Also, even if these two-syllable adjectives add derivational prefixes, they still take the same inflections that the base form does (e.g., *unhappier, unfriendlier*, etc.).

- Third, all two-syllable adverbs ending in *-ly* that do not have an adjective homonym also ending in *-ly* take only periphrastic *more* (never inflectional *-er*):

| Base Form | Base + More | Not Possible |
|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| slowly | more slowly | *slowlier |
| brusquely | more brusquely | *brusquelier |
| sharply | more sharply | *sharplier |

- Fourth, some adjectives that seem to prefer the periphrastic comparative form may also occasionally occur with an inflectional ending, especially in informal use. These include two-syllable adjectives that (a) end in *-er* or *-ure*, such as *tender, mature*; (b) end in a weakly stressed vowel followed by nothing more than a final /d/ or /t/, such as *stupid, quiet*; and (c) end in a weakly stressed syllable with final /m/ or /n/, such as *handsome, awesome, common*.

| Base Form | Base + More | Base + -er |
|------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| tender | more tender | tenderer |
| stupid | more stupid | stupider |
| handsomer | more handsome | handsomer |
| common | more common | commoner |

- Fifth, adjectives and adverbs with two syllables having any ending other than those described previously, as well as all adjectives and adverbs of three or more syllables, take only the periphrastic form *more*:

| | Base Form | Base + More |
|-----------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Adjective | devious | more devious |
| | pleasant | more pleasant |
| | beautiful | more beautiful |
| Adverb | skillfully | more skillfully |
| | cautiously | more cautiously |
| | independently | more independently |

- Finally, we note that *more* is often easier to use with one-syllable adjectives and adverbs when modified by *much*; for example,

Rudy is feeling much more rich since he won the lottery.

or when followed by a complement (Taylor, 2012):

My friend is more prone to accidents.

The “rules” presented here for the comparative inflection are less predictable than those for the plural or past-tense inflections. See, for example, Hilpert (2008). We regularly hear English speakers use a periphrastic form with one-syllable adjectives for emphasis (e.g., *Before this happened, I didn’t believe I could be MORE sad*) when the “rule” would predict the inflected form, and, in fact, such periphrastic forms seem to be increasingly used. There is also some individual variation, and thus some speakers may prefer *quieter* and *stupider* over *more quiet* and *more stupid*. Thus, we speak of a tendency rather than a rule when discussing this phenomenon; the variation that occurs among English speakers can be partially explained by the fact that the second and fourth groups of adjectives and adverbs listed here can take both the periphrastic and the inflectional forms. It also may be the case that the language is becoming more regular, opting for one form, the periphrastic one. This development would be welcome to teachers and learners alike, given the dizzying array of forms that exist currently.

At this point in time, students should probably be taught the general tendencies and should also be alerted to the fact that the comparative affix *-er* is sometimes used by English speakers for specific effect (i.e., to get attention) or in literature and other forms of creative writing. These are cases where the normal rules would not lead us to expect an *-er* comparative. One of the most famous examples of this is when Lewis Carroll had Alice say “...curiouser and curiouser!” in *Alice in Wonderland*. (We would normally use *more*, not *-er*, with adjectives that end in *-ious* such as *curious*, especially given the fact that the periphrastic form seems to be gaining in frequency in those cases where both forms are possible.) A good heuristic might be, “When in doubt, use the periphrastic *more* construction.” Other aspects of variation will be discussed later in this chapter, in the section about the use of comparatives.

Less versus Fewer

A much less complicated rule accounts for the distribution of *less* and *fewer*, the negative counterparts of *more*. In contrast to *more*, which may occur before both count and noncount nouns, *less* changes to *fewer* when modifying plural count nouns in formal contexts:

I have more { **money** } than Mr. Sims (does).
 { **books** }

Mr. Sims has { **less money** } than I (do).
 { **fewer books** }

We will have more to say about the distribution of *less* and *fewer* in informal contexts later in this chapter.

Clause Reductions and Case Adjustments

By now, you may have noticed that the constituent following *than* sometimes resembles a reduced clause:

**She has more books than I { have }
do }.**

and sometimes a noun phrase:

She has more books than John.

In the latter context, if a pronoun follows *than*, it tends to change from subject to object form (i.e., a subject form standing alone seems rather awkward):

**She has more books than { ?I }
me }.**

In other words, if no verb or operator follows the NP, English speakers tend to analyze the pronoun as the object of a preposition because even though *than* is a complementizer (like *that*, as discussed in Chapter 31), it also has prepositional force in such cases.

Irregular Comparative Forms

A number of irregular quantifiers, adjectives, and adverbs in English cannot be explained with reference to the *-er* inflection or the periphrastic *more* in comparisons:

| Base Form | Irregular Comparative Form |
|----------------------|--|
| Quantifiers | |
| { much } | more |
| { many } | |
| little | less |
| Adjectives & Adverbs | |
| good/well | better |
| bad/badly | worse |
| far | → farther (distance) |
| | → further (nonspatial progression) |
| | → elder (ages of siblings) |
| old | → older (regular form used elsewhere) |

In informal usage, *further*⁶ is sometimes used instead of *farther* to compare distance as well as nonspatial relationships of progression, and in all contexts, *older* is now generally used to refer to a sibling of greater age—that is, *elder* is becoming somewhat archaic even in this function.⁷

Substitute Expressions Used with Comparatives

Another source of difficulty to be aware of are the nominal substitute expressions commonly used in comparative constructions. Since English comparative constructions often involve two clauses, the second of which has been reduced, certain substitute expressions commonly occur as part of a comparison. The possessive pronouns are one such type of substitute expression (Halliday & Hasan, 1976):

This car is bigger than *mine* (is). (mine = my car)

However, when a possessive pronoun is not used, the nominal substitute expressions *one* and *ones* are often used along with an appropriate determiner such as a demonstrative or a definite article:

This car is bigger than *that one*. (one = car)

The blue books are cheaper than *the red ones*. (ones = books)⁸

The nominal substitutes *one* and *ones* may also occur without a definite determiner to replace a modified noun in comparisons with indefinite or generic reference:

A wool garment is warmer than a cotton one.

Wool garments are warmer than cotton ones.

In more formal contexts, the demonstrative pronouns *that* and *those* may be used in a comparison to introduce the second of two prepositional phrases; possessive constructions formed with *of* are especially common in this type of construction:

The financial resources of Mr. Jones are greater than those of Mr. Johnson.

A common error is deletion of the demonstrative and the *of* in such a context:

***The financial resources of Mr. Jones are greater than Mr. Johnson.**

The demonstratives *that* and *those* also introduce relative clauses as part of a comparison:

**{ Food } which we cook at home { is } often better than { that } which we eat in a restaurant.
{ Foods } { are }**

Again, there is a tendency to erroneously simplify such a construction. The result is an error such as the following:

***Food { which } we cook at home is often better than in a restaurant.
{ that }**

In both cases cited here (i.e., the possessive *of* phrase and the relative clause), the prescriptive rule is that the speaker/writer should maintain parallel structure in the reduced clause following the comparative construction in order to produce a grammatical sentence. The demonstrative pronouns *that* and *those* help satisfy the parallelism condition in such contexts.

The possessive pronouns and the substitutes *one* and *ones* tend to occur in informal language, whereas the use of the demonstrative pronouns *that* and *those* are more typical of formal usage. When they refer to countable nouns, either form can be used, the main difference being one of register:

Informal: **The stories (that) she wrote 10 years ago are more interesting than the ones (that) she is writing now.**

Formal: **The stories (that) she wrote 10 years ago are more interesting than those (that) she is writing now.**

However, when the substitute refers to mass nouns, only the demonstrative pronoun *that* is possible, since the use of *one(s)* requires a countable noun antecedent:

**The coffee on the stove is fresher than { that } on the counter.
{ *the one }**

Modifiers Occurring in Comparisons

The adverbs *even* and *still* sometimes are used to intensify the degree of a comparison:

The second game was (even/still) more exciting than the first one.

There are also words and phrases that quantify the degree of a comparison. Here are some common patterns going from high to low degree or extent:

For adjectives: **far more interesting**
a lot happier
(somewhat/a little/a bit) stronger
not (all) that much (bigger/more important)

OTHER COMPARATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

In addition to the four major types of comparative constructions outlined previously (i.e., comparing adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and verbs), there are a number of other structurally possible types of comparatives that you should be aware of, such as the following:

Correlative Comparison

This construction (see Capelle, 2011) is a frame in which the definite article combines with comparative phrases to express a special type of condition; the first part of a correlative comparison expresses the condition and the second part expresses the outcome. Both parts can be positive (*more*), both negative (*less*), or they can be mixed. For example:

The more sugar we eat, the more (sugar) we crave.

The less we earn, the less we spend.

The more you learn, the less you know.

The less he sees her, the more he wants her.

Sometimes correlative comparisons are reduced to brief idiomatic aphorisms:

The more, the merrier.

This sentence can be expanded to something like “The more people who are at the gathering, the merrier the event will be.” As unusual as the correlative comparison construction looks, it seems to be productive. For example, one of the coauthors of this volume recently encountered the following statement in an e-mail:

The more global large institutions are, the less control we have over them.

You may wish to make your students aware of this special comparative construction whenever it arises and allow them to interpret instances of the construction and to practice using it themselves, asking them if there is an equivalent construction in any other languages they know.

Conjoined and Paratactic Comparatives

Conjoined and paratactic comparatives are used to indicate that something is changing over time or space. For example, conjoined comparatives can express how things change over time:

We’re all just getting older and older, aren’t we?

Each time I see her, Arlene looks prettier and prettier.

See Browne (1964) for further discussion of such comparatives, which he called “free comparatives.”

In *paratactic comparatives*, comparative forms are used in sequence without a conjunction like *and* to indicate how close or far something is. For example, a parent giving clues to a child looking for an Easter egg might say:

Okay, Joey, you’re getting hotter, hotter, colder, hotter...

where hotter means “closer to” and colder means “farther from.” Alternatively, someone indicating the amount of milk that they want someone to pour into their coffee might say:

More, more, a bit more, stop! Thanks.

Fixed Phrases Using Comparative Forms

Carter and McCarthy (2006) point out that there are a number of common fixed forms involved in comparison (p. 766):

all the better

any the wiser

any the worse

all the more

none the wiser

no worse/none the worse

After the ten-mile hike, my new boots were *none the worse* for wear.

When Sam took third place in the 10K race with little practice, he vowed to try *all the more* to prepare for the next race.

*Pseudo Comparisons*⁹

There are some constructions that use surface comparative forms but do not express true comparisons of degree. They function instead as sentence-level adverbial logical connectors:

- a. (*more than* = *rather than*) and expresses a preference; for example,
Peter seeks danger more than adventure.
- b. (*more than* = *instead of*) and suggests a more accurate alternative; for example,
That specimen looks like an eel more than a snake.

Other Types of Comparison: A list of Remaining Constructions

- Comparison of two different properties of the same object rather than one property of two different objects; for example:
The river is wider than it is deep.
- Comparison involving two or more agents/experiencers as well as two or more objects; for example:
John enjoys movies more than I enjoy the theater.
- Comparison with a phrase of measurement rather than another object used as the standard of comparison;¹⁰ for example:
Mark is more than six feet tall.
This book weighs more than two kilos.
- Comparison with an absolute adjective used as the standard of comparison (used a lot in advertising); for example:
That basketball center is taller than tall.
This product is newer than new.
- Comparison with the comparative modifying a cardinal number; for example:
Ben has (more/fewer) than three brothers.
- Comparison with a measurement phrase modifying the comparative adjective or adverb; for example:
Mark is two inches taller than Phil.
- Comparison with *of* plus a predicate noun; for example:
He's more of a fool than (Alex/I thought).
- Comparing the degree to which an adjective applies to a given situation; for example:
Mia is (more/less) than satisfied with her marriage.

The additional comparative constructions discussed here combine with the four basic types outlined initially (adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and verbs) to yield many different syntactic and semantic combinations.

Issues of Meaning with Comparatives

COMPARATIVE FORM BUT SUPERLATIVE MEANING

True comparatives involve relative differences between two or more entities, two or more sets, two or more quantities, or two or more properties. A number of English constructions superficially appear to be comparatives, but in fact, they function semantically as superlatives (thus, they are only mentioned here but are discussed further in the following chapter on superlatives):

| Type of Comparative Form | Example |
|---|--|
| Comparatives used as suppletive variants of superlatives when there are only two members in a set | Clem is the taller of the two boys. Clem is the tallest of the $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{three} \\ \text{four} \\ \text{etc.} \end{array} \right\}$ boys. |
| Comparatives with (n)ever, which express a superlative meaning | That's more people than I've ever seen. / I've never seen more people. (= That's the most people (that) I've ever seen.) |
| Comparatives with <i>any other</i> , which express a superlative meaning | This play is better than any other play I've seen. (= This play is the best one (that) I've seen.) |

OTHER FORMS USED TO EXPRESS COMPARISON IN ENGLISH

The English language also has a number of other syntactic and lexical means to express comparison. Some of these are reminiscent of the dominant comparative construction types found in other languages of the world (see the earlier discussion of language typology in the introduction of this chapter):

| Type | Example |
|--|--|
| Some constructions limit the scope of an adjective or adverb, thereby making its meaning relative rather than absolute (see the previous discussion in this chapter). | Kate is tall for a girl. Gianni is tall compared to Raul. |
| Sometimes special verbs are used to express a superior degree or extent (see the previous discussion in this chapter). | Dylan's height $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{exceeds} \\ \text{surpasses} \end{array} \right\}$ Ryan's (height). |
| As an extension of the preceding type, some derived verbs using <i>out-</i> , <i>under-</i> , and <i>over-</i> as prefixes are also inherently comparative. | Andrew outplayed his opponents. The professor underrated his students. |
| One of the meanings of prepositions such as <i>over</i> and <i>under</i> is inherently comparative (i.e., is equivalent to <i>more than</i> or <i>less than</i>), respectively. | The temperature rose to over 80°F. Bob's annual salary is under \$40,000. |

POTENTIAL AMBIGUITY OF SOME COMPARISONS

Consider the following sentence. Depending on where one assumes that ellipsis has occurred, it is ambiguous and can have two readings:

Mary likes Alice (more/less) than Tanya.

- a. **Mary likes Alice (more/less) than she likes Tanya.**
- b. **Mary likes Alice (more/less) than Tanya likes Alice.**

Such ambiguity only occurs if all three NPs share the same semantic features. There would be no ambiguity with a sentence like the following, where the semantic features of the NPs would make the meaning clear:

Mary likes eggplant (more/less) than broccoli.

The Use of Comparatives

MARKEDNESS AND THE USE OF COMPARATIVE FORMS

As discussed in Chapter 20, many adjectives and adverbs that are commonly used to express comparison in English form oppositions:

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Positive polarity (+) (unmarked form) | tall—short long—short old—young heavy—light fast—slow | Negative polarity (–) (marked form) |
|--|--|--|

The existence of such paired positive and negative polarity forms gives us a way to avoid the use of *less* (which is marked and sounds awkward in many contexts). Markedness theory also predicts the use of unmarked *more* or *-er* as often as possible in the expression of comparison;¹¹ for example,

Dylan is taller than Ryan. Ryan is shorter than Dylan.
(?Ryan is less tall than Dylan.)

Psycholinguists call *more* and the positive polarity forms listed here “unmarked” because they are used more frequently in any given language, are learned first by children, and occur with greater frequency in the languages of the world. The unmarked forms also tend to be used in neutral questions that convey no special presuppositions:

How old (?young) are you?
How tall (?short) is Kate?
What more (?less) do you want?

Psycholinguists call *less* and the negative polarity forms listed here “marked” because they are used less frequently in any given language, learned later by children,¹² and typically used in highly marked contexts.

When Are Marked Comparative Forms Used?

In an attempt to determine when and why marked comparatives are used, Ssensalo (1976) examined the *White House Transcripts* (*New York Times*, 1974) and also a large number of advertisements. In both databases, the unmarked comparative forms were dominant; however, Ssensalo found that two major principles explained most of the marked or negative comparatives that she located in the *White House Transcripts*:

1. The marked form best expresses the speaker’s message or point of view; for example:
They will have to redesign it as a narrower action.
(saying *narrower* is more direct and specific instead of simply saying it is *too broad*).
2. The marked form was cued by the proximity of a related word or idea; for example:
In the [*Washington*] *Post* article, we’re so low now we can’t go any lower.
(*Lower* cannot easily be changed to *higher* in a paraphrase.)

In the advertisements, Ssensalo (1976) found that marked comparatives were used only about 20 percent of the time. When they occurred, they were used to indicate either the poorer quality of a rival product (e.g., *the same amount of the other detergent will do fewer dishes*) or because the marked form signals something desirable to the potential buyer:

Look younger!

We have lower prices.

USE OF LESS VERSUS FEWER

Earlier, we gave the formal rule for the distribution of *less* and *fewer* in negative comparisons of noun quantity:

1. Use *less* before uncountable nouns:

He has less furniture than you do.

2. Use *fewer* before plural countable nouns:

He has fewer chairs than you do.

However, anyone who has been closely observing informal English speech will have noticed that *less* is often used with plural countable nouns:

He has less chairs than you do.

Also, written uses of *less* modifying countable nouns have been attested even in formal or edited writing. Here are two examples written back in 1958, as cited in Chen (1982):

Out of the 170 million people in the country, less than 81 million have IQs that are high.

(Harper's Magazine, March, 1958)

Rejoice then that no less than 34 of the 81 past volumes ... are back in print. (N.Y. Times

Book Review sections March 30, 1958)

Chen (1982) examined a corpus of more than 180,000 spoken words and a control corpus of about 50,000 written words. In these corpora, he found 26 tokens of *less* and 2 tokens of *fewer*. Both tokens of *fewer* occurred in the written corpus. In the spoken corpus, *less* occurred in 6 tokens where traditional grammar would have prescribed *fewer*:

... **less people** (this form occurred twice)

... **less than 300 people**

... **less such fellows**

... **less than one person in four**

... **the number of farmers is less every day**

Because neither form was particularly frequent in his corpora, Chen (1982) administered a written, fill-in-the-blank questionnaire and an oral elicitation task to native English speakers (the oral task involved people looking at pictures of two apple trees, one having more apples; or two desks, one having more books on it, etc.). He found that only 16 percent of the responses on the written task used *less* where *fewer* was predicted by the traditional rule, but that slightly over 50 percent of the responses on the oral elicitation task used *less* where *fewer* was predicted. No one used *fewer* where *less* was predicted on either task. This suggests that the college students that Chen used as consultants tended to monitor their use of *less* and *fewer* on the written questionnaire but did this much less often on the oral tasks.

On the basis of his various sources of data, Chen (1982) identified four factors that seem to influence the use of *less* rather than *fewer*:

1. English speakers are less likely to use *fewer* in informal speech than in formal writing.
2. Nouns of measurement (like *bushel*) are even less likely to be preceded by *fewer* than plural countable nouns (like *apples*):

less bushels of apples (rather than *fewer*)

fewer apples/less apples (both occur)

3. Separation of *fewer* from the head noun encourages the use of *less*:

less than 50 people

4. Ellipsis of constituents following *less* or *fewer* encourages the use of *less* (i.e., *fewer* is rarely used pronominally):

They told us 300 people would come to the rally, but there were less.

Chen's (1982) results are reinforced by the fact that *less* occurs in all syntactic environments where a negative comparison is possible:

Adjective: **to be less extravagant than**

Adverb: **to dance less gracefully than**

Verb: **to weigh less than**

Noun: **less money than**

However, *fewer* can occur only in the last environment—with nouns—and then only if the noun is countable and plural (e.g., *fewer dollars than*). Thus, *fewer* seems to be a suppletive¹³ form of *less* that can occur only as a modifier of plural countable nouns. Chen (1982) speculates that because *less* can encode a smaller-than-other quantity with no regard at all for countability and plurality, while *fewer* must explicitly take these features into account, it is sometimes hard to use *fewer* as a modifier of plural countable nouns, and this is especially true when the modifier and the head noun are not adjacent.

USE OF *-ER* VERSUS *MORE*

Solomon (1994) compared the use of naturally occurring tokens of inflected (*-er*) and periphrastic *more* comparatives in a corpus of spoken American English and found that periphrastic *more* is being used increasingly in many cases where the *-er* form is expected. Some of the discourse-sensitive reasons that she isolated to explain this are the following:

1. The speaker changes from the inflectional form to the periphrastic form because she/he needs to emphasize the positive comparison (one can stress *more* but not *-er*):

My instructor told me to come up with a clearer thesis statement, but I don't see how I can make it any MORE clear.

2. Periphrasis is used with the base form in some cases where the positive form of the base word occurred in the preceding clause (no special emphasis):

It's easy to bake a cake . . . It's more easy to bake cakes than pies.

3. Some collocations frequently occur with *more*: *a (whole) lot more*, *way more*, *even more*, *a (little) bit more*, *much more*, and so on. If one has started using one of these strong collocates, there may be pressure to use periphrastic *more*:

I'm way more funny than he is.

4. In some environments, the choice of either periphrasis or inflection seems to depend on an earlier comparative form occurring in a more or less parallel structure, and this seems to happen much more often with periphrasis [i.e., there are many more cases like (a) than cases like (b)]:

a. I'm more aware of pressures . . . so I'm more tense, like now.

b. There's been a lot of influence from English, in a briefer but intenser manner.

Sometimes, Solomon's (1994) examples seem to reflect two or more of these tendencies. For example, the following has both the emphatic stress illustrated in (1) and the repetition of forms mentioned in (2):

It's gonna be tough with him . . . It's gonna be MORE tough without him.

Finally, we should note that Solomon (1994) found five tokens of double marking produced by native speakers, two of which involved irregular forms:

?I am way more funnier than he is.

***It seems to taste more better when it's oily and fried.**

***She didn't make the problem worser.** (i.e., comparative *worse* + *-er*)

?And it made her a little more sneakier. (two tokens from the same speaker)

Form and Meaning of Equative Constructions

PATTERNS FOR EQUATIVES

In many respects (i.e., both semantically and syntactically), equative constructions are similar to comparatives. However, when we formulate an equative construction, we presuppose a degree of similarity or identity (as opposed to the degree of difference we presuppose when we formulate a comparison). For example:

$$X \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{is} \\ \text{has} \\ \text{other} \\ \text{verbs} \end{array} \right\} \text{ as (MUCH /MANY) A as Y}$$

$$X \text{ is } \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{similar} \\ \text{identical} \end{array} \right\} \text{ to Y with respect to A}$$

The equative construction—like the comparative—occurs with all four major parts of speech:

Adjective: **Mel is as tall as George (is).**

Adverb: **Ava runs as fast as Charlotte (runs/does).**

Noun: **Ed has as (much money/many books) as Jack (has/does).**

Verb: **Roger weighs as much as Paul (weighs/does).**

Also, the complementizer *as*—like the complementizer *than*—can be followed by a reduced clause:

She has as many books as I { have } { do }.

or simply an NP:

She has as (many/few) books as John.

In the latter context, if a pronoun follows *as* instead of a lexical noun, it once again tends to change from subject to object form in informal conversation:

She has as many books as { me } { ?I }.

In other words, if no verb or operator follows the NP, English speakers tend to treat the NP as the object of a preposition. Thus, the complementizer *as*—like the complementizer *than*—appears to have some of the features of a preposition.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING EQUATIVES

Surface Variations

Notice that the underlying *much* in the formula “as (MUCH) ... as” changes to *many* before plural count nouns, and that the *much* must be deleted before adjectives and adverbs. The failure to observe these environmentally motivated alternations produces errors like these:

*Sam has as much books as Harry.

*Jill climbs hills as much fast as Jack.

Similes

English has a productive figure of speech called the *simile*, which takes the form:

NP1 + linking verb + as + Adjective + as + NP2

The baby's skin is as soft as silk.

Peter's stare was as cold as ice.

You look as white as a ghost.

C. Fillmore (personal communication) has pointed out that only literal equatives can take a complement clause with a redundant verb or operator. A figurative simile cannot do this:

In summer, Washington is as hot as Tokyo is.

*Washington is as hot as hell is.

*You are as dead as a doornail is.

In informal speech, the first *as* can be deleted in a simile:

Washington is hot as hell.

Moder (2010) points to a simile with the **It's like NP** construction that is not as strong as an equative, but which can be used to claim a resemblance:

That road is like a roller coaster.

Similes are perhaps not frequent in spoken or written corpora that reflect everyday usage or factual prose. However, they are part of English, and learners need to recognize similes as a figurative rather than a literal use of language when they encounter them (Moon, 2008).

The Negative Equative

The equative construction has a negative form, which is equivalent semantically to a negative or marked comparative:

Paul doesn't have as much money as Peter. = Paul has less money than Peter.

The Occurrence of So (Much) . . . As

The form *so* may replace the first *as* of the equative formula when it is immediately preceded by *not*:

Rachel is not $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{so} \\ \text{as} \end{array} \right\}$ tall as Kate (is).

This is not possible in affirmative equatives:

*Rachel is so tall as Kate (is).

Certain negative words other than *not* can also account for some of the variation of *so* with *as*:

Nothing is $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{so} \\ \text{as} \end{array} \right\}$ exciting as this!

I've never seen anyone $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{so} \\ \text{as} \end{array} \right\}$ happy as Carolyn.

In addition to sentences like those given here with overtly negative words such as *not*, *nothing*, and *never*, *so* may also occur instead of *as* in at least two other types of sentences that have the potential for negative (as well as positive) implication:

Wh-questions: **What is $\left\{ \begin{smallmatrix} \text{so} \\ \text{as} \end{smallmatrix} \right\}$ rare as a day in June?** (rhetorical)

(= "There is nothing $\left\{ \begin{smallmatrix} \text{so} \\ \text{as} \end{smallmatrix} \right\}$ rare as a day in June.")

Conditionals: **I'll be happy $\left\{ \begin{smallmatrix} \text{so} \\ \text{as} \end{smallmatrix} \right\}$ long as I have you.**

(= "If I have you, I'll be happy.")

We will say more about the use of *so* versus *as* later in this chapter.

THE MEANING OF EQUATIVES VIS-A-VIS COMPARATIVES

Mitchell (1990) has pointed out that equatives are not constructions of strict identity but convey instead a sense of "same or more." Of the following examples, Mitchell says that most people treat (1) and (2) as synonymous, yet the possibility of (3), the contradiction in (4), and the somewhat tautological but still possible (5) indicate that equatives are more like comparatives than most grammars would suggest (p. 59):

1. **Mary is as tall as her father.**
2. **Mary and her father are identical in height.**
3. **Mary is as tall as her father. In fact, she's taller than him.**
4. **?Mary is as tall as her father. In fact, she's shorter than him.**
5. **Mary is as tall as her father. In fact, they're identical in height.**

Further, if comparison with respect to quantity (*much/more*; *little/less*) is combined with negation, we get the following equivalences between comparatives and equatives (Mitchell, 1990, p. 63):

| <i>Comparative</i> | = | <i>Equative</i> |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| X costs more than Y | = | X doesn't cost as little as Y |
| X costs less than Y | = | X doesn't cost as much as Y |
| X costs no more than Y | = | X costs as little as Y |
| X costs no less than Y | = | X costs as much as Y |

If one adds the possibility of using gradable adjectives with positive and negative polarity (*tall/short*), then the following equivalences are available (Mitchell, 1990, p. 67):

| <i>Comparative</i> | = | <i>Equative</i> |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------|
| [taller than] | = | not as short as |
| less short than | | |
| less tall than | = | not as tall as |
| [shorter than] | | |
| no taller than | = | [as short as] |
| no less short than | | |
| no less tall than | = | [as tall as] |
| no shorter than | | |

Thus, as Mitchell (1990) shows us, comparatives and equatives—in combination with negation—have an inverse relationship, such that the cognitively least demanding form (i.e., the forms in square brackets in these paired sets) will tend to be used most often to express a given meaning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF EQUATIVE MEANINGS

The Same ... *As versus As ... As*

Many textbooks suggest that *the same ... as* can function as the equivalent of an equative:

1. **Joe is as tall as Jim.**

2. **a. Joe is the same height as Jim. = Jim is the same height as Joe.**

b. Joe and Jim are the same height.

As we have just pointed out by citing Mitchell's (1990) work, an equative expresses "as much as and possibly more than." Use of *the same* does not have this meaning. It means "identical, exactly the same." This is often reinforced through the use of modifiers like *just* and (*very*) *much*:

He looks just the same as his father.

I have (very) much the same opinion as Ralph does.

Also, *the same* can function as a symmetric predicate, where all the permutations are equivalent at the sentence level, as shown in the examples in (2). Such permutations are not possible with equative constructions; thus, the constructions are not equivalent.

The Potential Ambiguity of As Well As

Because of the deletions that occur in degree constructions, sometimes these constructions are ambiguous. Consider, for example, a sentence such as the following:

Jane can sing as well as Sarah.

In one interpretation—"Jane is as good a singer as Sarah"—*as well as* expresses the similarity in their degrees of proficiency as singers. The other meaning for this sentence is "In addition to Sarah, Jane can sing," which could be paraphrased as "Sarah sings and Jane sings too." In these cases, *as well (as)* is functioning as a prepositional logical connector expressing addition; that is, no element of degree is being expressed.

Issues Concerning the Use of Equative Constructions

MORE ON SO/AS VARIATION

A number of factors other than an adjacent negative form or an inherent negative meaning must be considered in accounting for *so/as* variation in equatives. First of all, the acceptability of *so* greatly diminishes when other lexical items intervene between the negative word and *so/as*:

Joe does not speak $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{as} \\ \text{?so} \end{array} \right\}$ well as Mark.

However, the probability of *so* occurring increases when an adverb with negative associations such as *nearly* (= not exactly) directly precedes the equative construction:

Joe { **doesn't**
 does not } speak nearly { **so**
 as } well as Mark.

Also, since *so* is perceived as somewhat formal—perhaps even literary or slightly archaic when used in equatives—its use greatly diminishes when *not* is contracted and no negative adverb like *nearly* is present:

Rachel isn't { **as**
 ?so } tall as Kate.

NEGATIVE EQUATIVES VERSUS NEGATIVE COMPARATIVES

In many cases, an equative is preferable to a negative comparative with *less* or a negative polarity adjective plus *-er* because it is perceived as being less direct or blunt. For example:

Rachel is not { **so**
 as } tall as Kate (is).

—versus—

(Rachel is { **?less tall**
 shorter } than Kate.)

Negative equatives are also often preferred over comparatives with negative polarity adjectives because they seem to be less awkward stylistically, or more tactful and polite:

Joe doesn't run as fast as Burt { **runs**
 does }.

—versus—

(Joe runs { **?less fast**
 slower } than Burt { **runs**
 does }.)

A data-based study of when to use the negative equative rather than a *less/fewer* comparative or a marked comparative with *-er* is not yet available (to our knowledge); thus, further research on this topic would be useful. We have observed such sentences being used as models or being elicited in drills—but in inappropriate ways—in ESL/EFL classrooms and textbooks. In the meantime, using the bracketed version of semantically equivalent forms indicated on page 782 in the sets adapted from Mitchell (1990) seems to be a good rule of thumb.

Conclusion

This chapter has in no way exhausted all that could be said about comparative and equative constructions in English. We have not provided the usual syntactic analysis (i.e., the tree diagrams) because the available descriptions were either inadequate or too complicated to incorporate here. Furthermore, it is obvious that many important questions of usage (e.g., *-er* versus *more*, equative versus negative comparative) deserve careful future study. Depending on how comparison is expressed in the learner's language or languages, the learning challenge could very well involve all three dimensions of grammar: form, meaning, and use.

Teaching Suggestions

- Form/Meaning.** Badalamenti and Henner-Stanchina (2007) demonstrate a good way to practice comparison of adjectives (the simplest pattern). They have students work in pairs to elicit information about each other and to generate as many comparatives and equatives as possible:

| Category | Me | Partner |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1. Age | | |
| 2. Height | | |
| 3. Hair color | | |
| 4. Eye color | | |
| 5. Personality | | |
| Etc. | | |

Examples: My partner is older than (I am/me).

I'm not as old as my partner.

- Form/Meaning.** To introduce comparison of noun quantities, have each group of students compare the amount of money that two people in the group have in their wallets:

| | Pennies | Nickels | Dimes | Quarters | Dollars | Total money |
|-----------|----------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Greta | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 5 | \$6.03 |
| Christine | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 4 | \$5.07 |

Example: Greta has more pennies than Christine.

(or—more precisely—Greta has one more penny than Christine.)

- Form/Meaning.** To compare adverbs, Badalamenti and Henner-Stanchina (2007) suggest the following: Students work in pairs, and together they produce comparisons based on a grid with verbs and adverbs.

| Verb | Adverb | Comparisons |
|-------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| study | hard | My partner studies harder than I do. |
| read | well | |
| write | neatly | |
| speak | clearly | |
| run | fast | |

- Use.** A realistic environment for eliciting negative polarity (or marked) comparatives is to show students objects—or present them with situations where both things are, for example, smaller, shorter, or less than normal. In such a case, it makes sense to use a negative polarity form. Here are a few examples:

- Two pencils—both short, but one more so than the other:

The blue pencil is shorter than the yellow one. (rather than *The yellow pencil is longer than the blue one.*)

- b. Stick figures of Stan and Bill with heights indicated [Stan is short (5'2"); Bill is very short (5')]:

Bill is shorter than Stan. (rather than *Stan is taller than Bill.*)

5. **Use.** Wisniewska, Riggenbach, and Samuda (2007) offer suggestions for making tactful comparisons. One suggestion is to take the comparisons made by a newly arrived student from abroad and rewrite them so they are more tactful and polite.

| Original Statement | Polite Revision |
|--|--|
| 1. Children in the U.S. watch more TV. | Children in my country don't watch as much TV as they do in the U.S. |
| 2. People have dinner earlier in the U.S. | In my country, people don't have dinner as early as in the U.S. |
| 3. People change jobs more often in the U.S. | In my country, people don't change jobs as often as in the U.S. |

6. **Form/Meaning.** To introduce equatives, use the concept of identical twins so that the equatives can be practiced naturally.

| | Age | Height | Weight | Number of Siblings | Year in College |
|--------|------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Sandra | 18 | 5'5" | 115 lbs. | 3 | Freshman |
| Sheila | 18 | 5'5" | 115 lbs. | 3 | Freshman |

Examples: Sandra is as $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{old} \\ \text{tall} \end{array} \right\}$ as Sheila.

Sheila weighs as much as Sandra.

This information could also be used to practice *the same...as*:

Example: Sandra is the same age as Sheila.

7. **Form/Meaning.** Comparatives and equatives can often be combined if information about cities, states, or countries can be assembled for purposes of comparison.

| | Area | Population | Year of Statehood | State Bird | Highest Point |
|----------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Kentucky | About 40,000 sq. miles | 4,400,000 | 1792 | Cardinal | 4,150 ft. |
| Virginia | About 40,000 sq. miles | 8,000,000 | 1788 | Cardinal | 5,730 ft. |

Examples: Kentucky is as large (in area) as Virginia.

Virginia has a larger population than Kentucky.

8. **Form/Meaning.** One way of teaching conjoined comparatives is to present information about an individual over a period of time:

| | | | | | | |
|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Harvey | Age | 10 | 13 | 16 | 19 | 21 |
| | GPA | 2.5 | 2.9 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 3.8 |

Examples: Harvey's GPA has been getting better and better.

Harvey $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{is} \\ \text{has been} \end{array} \right\}$ studying harder and harder.

9. **Use.** You can present the use of *-er* versus *more* to your students by contrasting short, informal adjectives with longer, more formal adjectives in a context where both types of adjectives are being used to make similar comparisons.

Situation: Mrs. Harrison owns a public relations firm. She is creating a new position and asks her manager if she should promote Ms. Franklin or Ms. Thomas.

Manager (on the phone with Mrs. Harrison): Oh, I'd promote Ms. Thomas. She's *smarter*, *works harder*, and is much *friendlier*.

Manager (in a written memo to Mrs. Harrison): I recommend Ms. Thomas for the promotion because she is *more intelligent* and *more industrious* than the other person being considered. Also, Ms. Thomas is *more personable*, which will also be an important asset to bring to the new position.

Students can then be given other situations; they can work in pairs or groups to generate the phone dialogue and written memo based on the model.

10. **Use.** Carlisi (2008) suggests using the first two stanzas of William Wordsworth's poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" to introduce similes and to show that in some genres, like poetry and casual conversation, the first *as* can be deleted in equatives, as Wordsworth does in this poem:

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| I wandered lonely as a cloud | (He was as lonely as a cloud.) |
| That floats on high o'er vales and hills, | |
| When all at once I saw a crowd, | |
| A host of golden daffodils; | |
| ... Continuous as the stars that shine | (The daffodils were as continuous |
| And twinkle on the Milky Way. . . | as the stars on the Milky Way.) |

To then practice similes, Carlisi suggests that students work in groups to discuss some stereotypical similes and to try to generate new, more creative ones to share with the class.

Stereotypical simile

I feel as fresh as a daisy.

His skin is as tough as leather.

Her heart is as cold as ice.

I'm as hungry as a bear.

She's as pretty as a picture.

New, original simile

I feel as fresh as the morning after it rained.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide an original example sentence for each of the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples.
 - a. the comparative construction
 - b. the equative construction
 - c. irregular comparative adverb
 - d. absolute use of an adjective
 - e. use of an adverb to express degree
 - f. correlative comparative
 - g. unmarked comparative adjective
2. Describe the ambiguity in the following sentences.
 - a. Phyllis likes Carol more than Sue.
 - b. Mark teaches Sam as well as Ralph.
3. What part of speech is being compared in the following sentences?
 - a. Harry throws the ball farther than Ned does.
 - b. John has more than two cars.
 - c. I bought more oranges than we can eat.
 - d. This book costs more than I want to pay.
 - e. This movie is more interesting than the one we saw last week.
4. Why is the following sentence awkward or questionable? What would be better?
?Joan sings less well than Sally.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

5. ESL/EFL students have produced the following statements. What would you tell them?
 - a. *To make the story more short, I'll just tell the ending.
 - b. *I like this book more better than that one.
 - c. *I was lucky than my little brother.
 - d. *Their prediction about empathy was not as realistic than they had thought.
 - e. *The newspapers in Los Angeles have better international coverage than in San Diego.
6. Many languages express compound comparatives with a meaning of progressive change in a way that more clearly parallels more formal English constructions like these:
He grew ever taller. It became progressively more overcast.
To learners who are only familiar with such formal constructions, how would you present the more frequent and more colloquial compound construction? For example:
He grew taller and taller. It became more and more overcast.
7. Consider the following sentences:
 - a. I've seen monkeys more intelligent than Herbert.
 - b. I've seen more intelligent monkeys than Herbert.

What's the difference in meaning?

8. A student brings you a magazine article that contains the following:

Benjamin Franklin was both smarter and loyaler than . . .

He asks you why the writer used *loyaler* instead of *more loyal*. He thinks *loyaler* may be a mistake and wants your opinion. What would you say to the student?

9. What follows is a shortened form of the beginning of an article by Brock Brady, "Essential Strategies for Teaching Large Classes" (2013). Read it over. There are nine comparatives and two equatives. Identify these constructions and describe what part of speech is being compared or equated in each case in the following two paragraphs:

1. When does a class become large? It depends on the class. Young students make a
2. class larger than older students because of shorter attention spans. Diverse classes
3. become large sooner than homogeneous classes. However, in a survey done in
4. 2008 covering more than 30 countries most respondents felt that a class became
5. large with about 30 students (Brady, 2011).
6. Teachers can make the commitment to make a large class as effective as a smaller
7. class. You can do almost everything in large classes that you do in smaller ones;
8. you can make them as student-centered as smaller classes, but you have to do it
9. more explicitly and routinely.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For useful descriptions of the English comparative, see:

- Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. (2006). *Cambridge grammar of English* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Jespersen, O. (1964). *Essentials of English grammar*. University, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Quirk, R., & Greenbaum, S. (1973). *A concise grammar of contemporary English*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

For transformational analyses of the comparative and the equative construction in English, see:

- Bresnan, J. (1973). Syntax of the comparative construction in English. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 3(3), 275–342.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (1972). *A syntactic and psycholinguistic study of comparison in English* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

For useful treatments of semantic opposition and markedness, see:

- Kruse, D. A. (1986). *Lexical semantics*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Mettinger, A. (1994). *Aspects of semantic opposition in English*. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press.

For ESL/EFL texts with good ideas for teaching the comparative construction to beginners, see:

- Badalamenti, V., & Henner-Stanchina, C. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 1* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- O'Sullivan, J.K. (2007). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 1*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For materials designed to practice comparatives and equatives with intermediate-level learners, see:

- Carlisi, K. (2008). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 3*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Firsten, R. (2008). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 2*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
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For information on the adjectives and adverbs that occur most frequently in comparative and equative constructions, see:

- Reppen, R. (with Gordon, D.). (2012). *Grammar and beyond 1*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Reppen, R. (with Gordon, D.). (2012). *Grammar and beyond 2*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Endnotes

1. These nongradable adjectives occasionally are compared to express exaggerated or emphatic statements; for example:

You couldn't be more wrong about that!

The questionability of using the unmarked *-er* inflection here reinforces the unusual nature of such a statement; for example:

***You couldn't be wronger about that!**

2. We had been unaware of this typological pattern until R. Longacre (personal communication) informed us that several languages of New Guinea expressed comparison this way. Then later, B. Glover (personal communication) confirmed that this mode of comparing also occurs in some Native American languages.
3. M. Mould (personal communication) has told us, for example, that Igbo and most Bantu languages cannot reverse such a "surpass" comparison to directly express the notion that "Mary is shorter than John"; i.e., the *pass* verb can only be used to compare in a positive direction. However, not all languages having a "surpass" comparative are quite so restricted. D. Meyers (personal communication) has informed us that in Yoruba, it is possible to say "Mary surpasses John in shortness." At the moment, we do not know whether Yoruba always had this flexibility, or whether it acquired flexibility through internal change or through contact with other languages of the type discussed in the next section, "Comparison Using Degree Morphemes."
4. There are a few one-syllable adjectives that are exceptional in that they take only periphrastic *more* or *most*: *real*, *right*, *wrong*, and *like* (= similar to). Also adjectives with final consonant clusters prefer the periphrastic form, e.g., *more apt* (Taylor, 2012).
5. Syllabic [l] in this context generally becomes consonantal and begins a new syllable when the inflection is added (*gent•ler*).
6. According to Reppen (2012), *further* occurs 10 times more often than *farther* (p. 401).
7. The adjective *elder* does, however, occur in certain fixed collocations, such as *elder statesman*. The noun form *elder* occurs in limited contexts, such as *church elder*.
8. In Standard English, the plural substitute *ones* does not follow a plural demonstrative:
These cars are bigger than those (*ones).
9. What we are calling "pseudo comparisons" here were referred to as "qualitative" (rather than "quantitative") comparisons by McCawley (1964).
10. In this chapter, we are using the term *measure phrase* or *phrase of measurement* to refer to phrases like *6 feet tall* or *2 kilos* rather than the term *partitive noun*, which was used in Chapter 17 to describe such constructions.
11. See Celce-Murcia (1972) for empirical evidence that unmarked comparatives are produced significantly more frequently in English than are marked ones.
12. Donaldson and Balfour (1968), for example, have demonstrated that young English-speaking children cannot correctly distinguish *less* from *more* (i.e., they consistently interpret *less* as *more*) until they have reached a certain cognitive developmental stage that occurs somewhere around the age of 5.
13. Recall that suppletive forms are grammatically related forms that are not historically derivable from the same morpheme (e.g., *go*—*went*; *bad*—*worse*, etc.).

Degree— Complements and Superlatives

CHAPTER

35

Introduction

In this chapter, we continue the discussion of degree constructions that we began in the preceding chapter, which covered comparatives and equatives. First, we discuss several degree complements that take infinitives and express notions such as “excess” [*too (much/many)*], “insufficiency” [*too (little/few)*], and “sufficiency” (*enough*). Before adjectives and adverbs, only *too* occurs, and it expresses excess or insufficiency, depending on the meaning of the adjective or adverb it modifies:

Excess

Tyler is too smart to believe that story.

He has too much money to understand poor peoples' problems.

She has too many tasks right now to finish any one task well.

Insufficiency

Nancy is too young to vote.

Bob has too little time now to go bird-watching.

Eric has too few supporters to win the election.

Sufficiency

We have enough money to buy a house.

Ann runs fast enough to win the race.

Second, we consider complements of “causality,” which also involve an element of degree: (*so much/many; so little/few; or such a/an*) all of which take *that* complements. The *that* complementizer is often deleted in informal speech:

I had so many choices (that) I felt overwhelmed.

We had so little time (that) we couldn't finish the job.

There was such a clamor (that) we didn't hear most of the speech.

Then we examine the absolute use of *too*, *so*, and *such* in contexts where they function as emphatic counterparts of the intensifier *very*:

You are so/too kind.

He is such an idiot.

The final degree construction that we consider is the English superlative (*-est, most, least*). We comment on the highly marked nature of this construction since many languages of the world do not have a superlative degree that is morphologically distinct from their comparative degree. For example, French uses the word *plus (more)* to express both comparative and superlative meanings:

Joel est plus grand que Roger. ('Joel is taller than Roger.')

Joel est le plus grand dans sa classe. ('Joel is the tallest in his class.')

Many other languages are like French rather than like English or its related Germanic languages, which have distinct comparative and superlative forms. We will elaborate on this typological distinction later in the chapter. In Chapter 34, we showed how the English comparative could be used to express superlative meanings. In this chapter, we focus on the superlative forms *most*, *least*, *fewest*, and *-est*, which explicitly convey superlative meanings in English.

We also contrast the superlative degree with the comparative degree because this contrast is the crux of many of the teaching-learning problems encountered when superlatives are presented in the ESL/EFL classroom.

Form, Meaning, and Use of Degree Complements

There are several degree complements that resemble comparatives and equatives in that they make relative (rather than absolute) use of the four major parts of speech.

TOO (MUCH/MANY; LITTLE/FEW) PLUS INFINITIVE COMPLEMENT

$too + \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{ADJ} \\ \text{ADV} \\ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{much} \\ \textit{little} \end{array} \right\} \text{ (N noncount)} \\ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{many} \\ \textit{few} \end{array} \right\} \text{ (N count)} \end{array} \right\} + (\textit{for NP}) + \textit{infinitive complement}$

He's *too old* to join the army.

She left *too quickly* for me to thank her.

Burt has *too* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{much money} \\ \textit{many investments} \end{array} \right\}$ to understand what it's like to be poor.

I have *too little time* to exercise.

There were *too few examples* in his essay to support his hypothesis.

Martha talks *too much* to be a good listener.

Semantically, this construction indicates either an excess or an insufficiency of some quality or of something measurable. When *much* or *many* occurs, the meaning of excess is explicit. Likewise, when *little* or *few* occurs, the meaning of insufficiency is overtly expressed. None of these quantifiers, however, occurs before an adjective or an adverb. In such cases, an adjective or an adverb with positive polarity would express excess (e.g., *too fast*), whereas an adjective or an adverb with negative polarity would express insufficiency (e.g., *too small*). Note that *much* and *little* precede noncount nouns, while *many* and *few* are the related forms that precede count nouns.

SO (MUCH/MANY; LITTLE/FEW) PLUS THAT-CLAUSE

| | | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------|---|-------------------------------|--------------|
| so | } | ADJ | } | (to VP) (that) + complement S | |
| | | ADV | | | |
| | | { much little } | | | (N noncount) |
| | | { many few } | | | (N count) |

They're *so noisy* (that) we can't sleep.

He ran *so fast* (that) no one could catch him.

I have *so* { *much work*
many errands } to do (that) I'll never finish.

Bess has *so* { *little ability*
few skills } (that) she won't find a good job.

He runs *so little* (that) it won't help him get in shape.

When *so* (*much/many; little/few*) is used in this construction, the notion of “causality” is conveyed; that is, the degree, extent, or amount—positive or negative—expressed in the main clause is sufficient to bring about the result expected in the complement clause preceded by *that*. Just as in the previous construction, *much* and *little* occur before noncount nouns and after verbs, while *many* and *few* occur before countable nouns. Also, none of these quantifiers precedes an adjective or an adverb; the *so* occurs directly before the adjective or adverb in such environments.

SUCH (A/AN) (ADJ) NOUN PLUS THAT-CLAUSE

| | | | | | |
|------|---|-------------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------|
| such | } | { a an } | } | (that) + complement S | |
| | | (adj) N count | | | |
| | | { (adj) N plural ∅ } | | | (adj) N noncount |

Bobby was *such a nuisance* (that) he was sent to his room.

They were *such fine philanthropists* (that) many organizations benefited from their generosity.

The victim was in *such agony* (that) she was taken to the hospital.

This construction closely parallels the one above in meaning and structure. In both constructions, causality is expressed in the clause containing *so* or *such*, and a result is expressed in the *that*-clause. Unlike *so*, however, *such* modifies only nouns or noun phrases. *Such* is used instead of *so* when the degree or extent of a noun is being conveyed rather than its quantity or amount. When *such* modifies a singular countable noun, the indefinite article *a/an* must follow *such*. In other environments, *such* may directly precede the noun it modifies. Note that an adjective frequently occurs between *such* (*a/an*) and the head noun:

such an unusual incident...

such easy questions...

There is often a near-paraphrase relationship between *so* and *such* in those cases where semantically parallel nouns and adjectives exist:

Jane is *such an athlete* that the boys want her on the varsity team.

Jane is *so athletic* that the boys want her on the varsity team.

The test had *such easy questions* that I finished early.

The test questions were *so easy* that I finished early.

ENOUGH PLUS INFINITIVE COMPLEMENT

$\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{ADJ} \\ \text{ADV} \\ \text{verb} \\ \text{<noun x>}^1 \end{array} \right\} \text{enough<noun x>}^1 \text{ (for NP) infinitive complement}$

She's qualified enough for them to hire her.

He ran fast enough to win the race.

He weighs enough to compete as a heavyweight.

I have $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{enough money} \\ \text{money enough} \end{array} \right\}$ to get by for a while.

Enough, unlike the two previous degree complements we have discussed, follows adjectives and adverbs as well as verbs. It expresses “sufficiency,” and it usually precedes nouns; however, there is a less frequent variant of the *enough* + noun construction where *enough* may follow the noun instead (see the last example). Another difference is that *enough* simply doesn't occur with the quantifiers *much*, *many*, *little*,² or *few*.

Semantically, *not* + *enough* is similar to *too* + *little/few* since, in both cases, the meaning of “insufficiency” is conveyed:

He doesn't have enough time to exercise.

He has too little time to exercise.

There are some differences we should mention with regard to infinitive complements and *that*-clause complements occurring in degree constructions. When *not* + *enough* is used to paraphrase *so little/few*, any *not* occurring in the *that*-clause complement following the *so* is not expressed in the corresponding infinitive complement following *not enough*:

He exercises so little that he is not in good shape.

He doesn't exercise enough $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{to be in good shape} \\ \text{*not to be in good shape} \end{array} \right\}$.

The same thing happens when [*too (much/little) (for NP) infinitive complement*] is used to paraphrase [*so (much/little) that-clause* or *such (a/an) (adj) N that-clause*]. In other words, any overt negative in the *that*-clause following *so* or *such* is not expressed in the parallel infinitive complement following *too (much/little)*:

He is so weak that he can't speak coherently.

He is too weak $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{to speak coherently} \\ \text{*not to speak coherently} \end{array} \right\}$.

The ESL/EFL teacher might point out that the infinitive complements following *not enough* or *too (little/few)* are implicitly negative since this fact is not always obvious to learners.

Another detail to be pointed out to learners is a fact already established in Chapter 31: when a *for* phrase precedes the infinitive, it provides a subject for the infinitive complement. When there is no *for* phrase, the subject of the main clause controls the reference of the unexpressed subject of the infinitive:

The soup is too hot for me [subj] to eat. (subj = me/I)
Nora exercises enough [subj] to stay healthy. (subj = Nora/she)

THE ABSOLUTE USE OF *SO*, *TOO*, AND *VERY*

Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) have pointed out that *so* is sometimes used absolutely as an emphatic form of *very*:

I'm so tired!

The party was so delightful!

They add that this usage is more typical of women's speech than men's. To their observations, we add that in environments where *so* does not precede an adjective or adverb, *so much/many* may also be used absolutely as emphatic forms of *very much/many*:

I enjoyed this book so much!

They have so many friends!

Quirk et al. (1985) also mention that *too* is sometimes used absolutely as a colloquial emphatic counterpart of *very*:

He isn't too bright.

I don't feel too good.

They add that this use is more typical of informal American English than of the British variety. In the past, this informal use of *too* as an intensifier has generally been most acceptable in semantically negative contexts. When ESL/EFL learners overgeneralize this absolute use of *too* to affirmative contexts, questionable utterances sometimes result:

?This food is too good.

when what such learners want to say "This food is very good."

In all dialects of English, *too much* and *too little* can be used absolutely, but again, this use occurs most often in contexts where a negative meaning is implied:³

He drinks too much.

They study too little.

Some ESL/EFL learners incorrectly extend this pattern to affirmative contexts and produce questionable utterances such as this:

?We like you too much.

when what they mean to say is, "We like you very much."

We should point out that younger speakers of American English use absolute *too* in positive as well as negative contexts in informal speech, as the two following examples with *too fun* indicate:

[context: ordering dessert at a restaurant]

None of us really knew what a whoopie pie was, but the name sounded too fun to pass up.

(Finz, 2010, as cited in COCA)

[context: if the pet iguana Zanzi should also move to Chicago]

I suggested that Chicago might not be too fun for Zanzi, given its cold winters. (Kalpakian, 2005)

Obviously, such current uses of absolute *too* deserve further analysis.

Not surprisingly, the degree morpheme *such* (*a/an*) can also be used absolutely as a noun intensifier:

This is such nonsense! (= complete/utter nonsense)

It was such a surprise! (= a very big surprise)

The Form of the Superlative Construction

HOW OTHER LANGUAGES EXPRESS THE SUPERLATIVE DEGREE

ESL/EFL teachers should be aware of the fact that most languages do not have morphologically distinct comparative and superlative forms. However, English and related languages (i.e., other Germanic languages such as German, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish) are somewhat idiosyncratic, in that they have distinct superlative forms. Languages without a distinct superlative form often express a superlative meaning by using either a definite article or some other defining word(s) with a comparative morpheme; for example:

Ben is the more intelligent student in the class. (literally)

Ben is the most intelligent student in the class. (meaning)

or by using a construction that excludes all other members of the set to which the subject belongs:

The VW is more economical than any other car. (literally)

The VW is the most economical car. (meaning)

Citing examples similar to these sentences, Jespersen (1924) points out that the superlative degree does not necessarily indicate a greater or lesser degree than the comparative; rather, it expresses degree from a different point of view. For this reason, Jespersen feels that many languages are able to make do without superlative forms. In addition, some languages, such as those in the Romance family which originally possessed a distinct superlative (it existed in their source language: Latin), have since discarded their superlative form and have simply extended the semantic domain of their comparative forms. In other words, many languages have no distinct superlative form, either because they have never developed one or because they had one but discarded it over time because they found it unnecessary.

Furthermore, in his work on language universals, Greenberg (1966) has pointed out that superlatives are more “marked” than comparatives. That is to say, comparatives occur more frequently than superlatives in any language that has both forms. He also noted that if a language has a superlative form, it must also have a comparative form; however, the reverse is not true. Solomon’s (1994) data-based analysis of English comparative and superlative forms in spoken American English supports Greenberg’s claims. She found 561 tokens of inflected, periphrastic, and irregular comparatives and superlatives in her oral corpus. Only 180 (32 percent) of these tokens were superlatives (i.e., marked forms occur less frequently than unmarked ones). Of these 180 superlatives, 76 tokens (42 percent) occurred with the *-est* inflection, 55 tokens (31 percent) occurred with the periphrastic *most*, and 49 tokens (27 percent) were irregular (e.g., *best*, *worst*).

This evidence suggests that the English superlative may be harder for most ESL/EFL students to learn than the comparative and that the two forms can frequently be confused. Neuman (1977) did, in fact, find the following in compositions written by intermediate-level ESL students, confirming our prediction that these forms can be confused even by learners who are well beyond the beginning level in their acquisition of English (p. 131):

***I am the younger in my family.**

***That food is worst than the food for the pig.**

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

In terms of morphological distribution, the *-est* and *most* forms of the superlative behave exactly like the *-er* and *more* forms of the comparative. The following discussion is a brief, simplified restatement of the morphological rule that was given in somewhat greater detail for comparative forms in the preceding chapter.

*Superlative Inflectional Endings*⁴

First, adjectives and adverbs of one syllable take the inflectional ending, as do two-syllable adjectives with a final *-y* suffix (pronounced as unstressed /i/):⁵

| <i>Base Form</i> | <i>-est</i> |
|------------------|-----------------|
| big | biggest |
| tall | tallest |
| soon | soonest |
| hard | hardest |
| happy | happiest |
| noisy | noisiest |

Second, many other two-syllable adjectives that have a stressed first syllable and an unstressed second syllable ending in *-ly* (/li/), *-ow* (/o/), or *-le* (syllabic [l])⁶ also take the inflection, although it is certainly possible to use the periphrastic form in specific contexts, such as when extra emphasis is being placed on the superlative element (e.g., “She is the MOST friendly person I know”):

| <i>Base Form</i> | <i>-est</i> | <i>Also Possible</i> |
|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| friendly | friendliest | most friendly |
| narrow | narrowest | most narrow |
| gentle | gentlest | most gentle |

Note also that these two-syllable adjectives can add derivational prefixes and still take the same inflections as the base form (e.g., *unhappiest*, *unfriendliest*, etc.).

Third, all two-syllable adverbs ending in *-ly* that do not have an adjective homonym also ending in *-ly* take only the periphrastic form:

Adverbs Taking the Periphrastic Form

| <i>Base Form</i> | <i>Most</i> | <i>Not Possible</i> |
|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| slowly | most slowly | *slowliest |
| brusquely | most brusquely | *brusqueliest |
| sharply | most sharply | *sharpliast |

Fourth, there are adjectives that seem more suited to the periphrastic superlative form but that also may occur with the inflectional ending, especially in informal use. These include two-syllable adjectives that (a) end in *-er* or *-ure*, such as *tender*, *mature*; (b) end in a weakly stressed vowel followed by nothing more than a final /d/ or /t/, such as *stupid*, *quiet*; and (c) end in a weakly stressed syllable ending in /m/ or /n/, such as *handsome*, *awesome*, *common*:

| <i>Base Form</i> | <i>Most</i> | <i>Also Possible</i> |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| tender | most tender | tenderest |
| stupid | most stupid | stupidest |
| handsome | most handsome | handsomest |
| common | most common | commonest |

Fifth, adjectives and adverbs of two syllables having any ending other than those described previously, as well as all adjectives and adverbs of three or more syllables, tend to take only the periphrastic form:

| | <i>Base Form</i> | <i>Most</i> |
|------------------|--|---|
| <i>Adjective</i> | curious pleasant beautiful | most curious most pleasant most beautiful |
| <i>Adverb</i> | skillfully cautiously independently | most skillfully most cautiously most independently |

However, recall that we pointed out in Chapter 34 that these guidelines are more tendencies than airtight rules. In fact, there are 13 attested instances in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) of a three-syllable adjective with the inflectional ending (Taylor, 2012). Here is one he cites from a New Zealand newspaper:

They say that sorry is the hardest word. It can also be the slipperiest. (*The Press*, November 10, 2007)

Nevertheless, the above mentioned morphological similarities are probably the main reason why so many people erroneously believe that comparative and superlative constructions are the same grammatically, with the only difference being the number of persons or objects compared; that is, they believe that when two things are being compared, one should use the comparative, and when three or more things are being compared, one should use the superlative. This, in fact, is the rule given in most ESL/EFL texts, as well as the rule cited in most reference grammars. If we do nothing else in this chapter, we hope to dispel this misleading oversimplification.

IRREGULAR SUPERLATIVE FORMS

The same adjectives and adverbs that were morphologically irregular in the comparative degree are also irregular in the superlative degree:

| <i>Base</i> | <i>Comparative</i> | <i>Superlative</i> |
|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| good/well | better | best |
| bad/ill | worse | worst |
| far | farther/further | farthest/furthest |
| much/many | more | most |
| little | less | least |

The *further/furthest* forms are used as the comparative and superlative forms of *far* in nonspatial contexts and are even now being used in spatial contexts in informal use:

Spatial: **We won the award for coming to the reunion from the (farthest/?furthest) distance.**

Nonspatial: **Leroy's testimony was furthest from the truth.**

The form *eldest* exists, but normally only as an adjective in NPs describing family relationships (e.g., *the eldest [brother/sister/sibling/cousin]*, etc.).

The Meaning of Superlatives

Comparatives are often used quite appropriately when three or more persons, objects, or properties are involved:

Jack is taller than John $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{and} \\ \text{or} \end{array} \right\}$ Bill.

Jill and Ann have more A's than B's $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{and} \\ \text{or} \end{array} \right\}$ C's.

Likewise, many speakers of English feel comfortable about using superlatives informally when only two objects or properties are being compared, even though use of the comparative form is considered to be formally more accurate in such cases; for example:

Bill is 6 feet tall, and Joe is 6 feet 2 inches tall.

Who's the tallest?

In fact, if we ask, "Who's the taller (of the two)?" which would be the prescriptively correct form here, we are merely using a comparative form in a superlative sense. This is because the semantic function of the superlative is to select one or more members out of a set (mathematically, a set has two or more members) because they rank first or last (with respect to other members of the set) on a scale that measures a particular attribute (e.g., height, size, weight, age, intelligence, or speed). This is why superlatives, like ordinals, tend to co-occur with a definite determiner and to be followed by prepositional phrases or *that*-clauses that describe the whole set out of which the subject of the superlative has been selected. For example:

Clem is the tallest one of the four boys.

Clem and Bob are the tallest boys that are in my class.

The superlative thus concerns itself with the extremes of a given scale with regard to a specific set, whereas the comparative ignores the extremes and looks at two points anywhere on the scale with regard to two or more individuals, objects, and so on. The number of persons or objects involved in a comparison, therefore, is not the most important thing that a native speaker of English considers when deciding whether to use a comparative or a superlative form.

This distinction of the extremes versus any two intermediate points on a scale gets blurred, however, since it's a fact that English comparative forms are sometimes used to express a superlative meaning. One example of this was given previously (i.e., "Who's the taller of the two boys?"), and at least two other situations exist where comparative forms are used to express a superlative meaning:

1. Comparatives with *(n)ever*:

I've never seen more people.

—or—

That's more people than I've ever seen. (That's the most people I've ever seen.)

2. Comparatives with *any (other)*:

This play is better than any other play I've seen. (This is the best play (that) I've ever seen.)

As a rule, if a sentence containing a comparative form can be paraphrased using a sentence with a superlative form, then we can say that the comparative form is being used to express a superlative meaning. (In fact, all superlative sentences in English can be paraphrased using a comparative form.) Superlative forms, on the other hand, are not used to paraphrase comparative meanings. Furthermore, as Stateva (2003) points out, while comparatives can be used for a superlative meaning, as in:

The chess set is the most expensive.

The chess set is more expensive than every toy.

a measure phrase can be added to the comparative, but not to the superlative (p. 276):

The chess set is 5 dollars more expensive than every toy.

***The chess set is (the) 5 dollars most expensive.**

NONSUPERLATIVE MEANINGS OF *MOST*

Intensifier. The adverb *most* can be used to intensify, with a meaning similar to *very*, to express a strong degree:

He was a most gracious host.

That was most thoughtful of you.

The use of the indefinite article *a* in the first example demonstrates that *most* is not being used to express a superlative meaning⁸ since a true superlative would select the definite article (if it occurred with an article).

Sometimes there can be ambiguity between a superlative reading and an intensifier reading of *most*; this is normally resolved by the context:

This book is most useful. (= the most useful of the set of books, or very useful)

Colloquial Use. In conversation, *most* is sometimes used as an informal shortened version of *almost*:

Bob reads the newspaper most every night.

Proportional Use. *Most* can also function as a general, indefinite quantifying determiner that fills the semantic space between “more than half” and “almost all” (see Chapter 17 and Ariel, 2004):

Most sausages contain pork.

I like most fish.

The same quantifier can be used in partitive constructions with definite reference:

Most of the students in this class are Asian.

Most of what he said was believable.

Sometimes the definite proportional use of *most* behaves as a pro-form with ellipsis of information that is recoverable from the preceding discourse:

That student made a lot of mistakes on the test. Most were trivial. (*most* = most of the mistakes)

Both the indefinite and definite use of the proportional *most* occur with plural or noncount nouns or an embedded clause, as in *most of what he said*. Note that while *most* has both superlative and proportional meanings, neither *fewest* nor *least* have such semantic duality; they function only as superlatives. (See Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, for further discussion.)

The Use of Superlatives

COLLOQUIAL USE

Colloquial use of the superlative involves using it absolutely, without explicitly specifying any set. In such cases, a superlative meaning is intended nonetheless:

You're { the greatest }!
 { the best }

Joe still thinks Ali's the greatest!

Another type of abbreviated superlative that occurs in colloquial usage includes sentences like the following, which end in *ever*:

That book was his best ever. (i.e., That was the best book that he ever wrote.)

The play was the most resounding flop ever. (i.e., The play was the most resounding flop of any play ever performed.)

The presence of *ever* makes such sentences more emphatic because the proposition holds true over a period of time.

CO-OCCURRENCE OF SUPERLATIVES WITH THE DEFINITE ARTICLE

It has already been noted that superlatives usually co-occur with the definite article or some other definite determiner or defining word; however, the underlying *the* can be omitted if *-est*, *most*, or *least* is not followed by a noun or a noun substitute like *one*⁹ in the surface structure—that is, if the underlying noun has been deleted.¹⁰ For example:

the *obligatory*

Which is the highest mountain?

Who climbed the highest one?

the *optional*

Which mountain is (the) highest?

Who climbed (the) highest?

THE USE OF MARKED AND UNMARKED SUPERLATIVES

In the preceding chapter and in Chapter 20, we stated that there were semantically related adjectives that had positive and negative polarity and that the positive forms were unmarked, while the negative forms were marked; here, we add *most* to the unmarked forms and *least* to the marked forms:

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| (+) = unmarked | (-) = marked |
| [most] | [least] |
| tall | long |
| tall | short |
| big | little |
| old | young |
| deep | shallow |
| | etc. |

These oppositions are as valid for superlatives as they are for comparatives, with the added caveat (noted earlier in this chapter) that superlatives are inherently more marked than comparatives.

The superlative form *least* is the most highly marked of all these forms. In other words, we tend not to say phrases such as “the least tall”:

?Bob is the least tall of all the boys.

but prefer to use *most*, or its morphological variant *-est*, if there exists a negative polarity word such as *short*, which we can combine with *most* or *-est*:

Bob is the shortest of all the boys.

Thus, whenever there are negative and positive polarity adjectives and adverbs available for English speakers to combine with *most* or *-est*, the form *least* tends not to occur.¹¹ So when does the form *least* occur? It is used frequently as the opposite of *most* whenever the ranking or scaling of items is involved to denote lowest rank or lowest position. For example:

the most/least { likely
expensive
important }

Another environment in which *least* occurs is a less negative one, where the use of *least* indicates the least negative (i.e., most nearly positive) member(s) of a set that is viewed as being completely negative; for example:

the least { objectionable
sinister
reprehensible }

There is, of course, the related comparative form *lesser*, which can also be used in negative contexts with this special type of superlative meaning if the set described has only two members:

the lesser { of two evils
evil }

Lesser, however, has more semantic flexibility than *least* since it can also be used as an adjective in a comparative sense that has no superlative counterpart:

a lesser punishment (= a less severe punishment)

Least versus Fewest

We should also briefly mention *fewest*, the suppletive variant of *least* that occurs before countable nouns in formal or prescriptively correct usage. (In informal usage, *least* often occurs in this environment instead of *fewest*.) Semantically, *fewest* is like *least*, in that it occurs as the opposite of *most* when items are being ranked or scaled:

Of all the children in the class, Barbara seems to have the most friends and Peggy the fewest (friends). (informal: the least [friends]).

Fewest also occurs in predominantly negative contexts to indicate the least negative (or most nearly positive) member of a set that is viewed as having only negative members:

Paul has reservations about all the proposals; however, he has the fewest reservations about the third one.

Again, *least* may be used as an informal variant of *fewest* here (i.e., *he has the least reservations*).

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REGULAR QUANTIFIERS AND SUPERLATIVES

In Chapter 17, we presented *least* and *fewest* as superlative forms of the quantifiers *little* and *few*; however, we should note several grammatical and semantic differences between the quantifiers (*little*, *few*) and the superlative forms (*least*, *fewest*). The quantifiers can be used to make assertions about small quantities that the speaker perceives negatively (and that do not imply any specific comparison):

They have little money.

They have few friends.

The superlative forms, on the other hand, occur with the definite article and specify (or imply) a relevant set for which the extreme negative quantity is being asserted:

They have the least money of anyone I know.

They have the fewest friends of anyone I know.

LACK OF DOUBLE MARKING WITH SUPERLATIVES

Solomon's (1994) findings for the use of superlatives in spoken data produced by native English speakers exhibit some differences with comparatives, in that no tokens of double marking occurred with superlatives, whereas 6 double-marked tokens occurred with comparatives

(e.g., *more sneakier*). She also found only 1 token of the periphrastic *most* superlative with a one-syllable adjective (versus 17 tokens of *more* with one-syllable adjectives for comparatives), and this token was a case where *most* was stressed (p. 17):

It's one of the MOST grand sights in New York City.

The 62 other one-syllable adjectives and adverbs took the *-est* inflection; for example (p. 17):

At the very deepest level of awareness

For two-syllable adjectives and adverbs, Solomon (1994) found 21 periphrastic forms versus 14 inflected forms. However, the periphrastic forms included tokens where *-est* would be predicted (p. 6):

That is the most corny thing I've ever done. (*corniest* would be predicted)

All three-syllable adjectives and adverbs (33 tokens) occurring in a superlative form in Solomon's (1994) corpus took the periphrastic *most*.

There were no instances of superlatives in Solomon's (1994) data that had *-est* occurring where *most* was predicted. Thus, while there appears to be some minor variation in the use of *most* and *-est* superlatives, there is not nearly as much as Solomon had detected in the case of *more* and *-er* comparatives. We feel that this is due to the major differences that we have described in the syntax of superlatives and comparatives: superlatives function as complex modifiers (post-determiners or intensifiers) within larger constituents, whereas comparatives function as higher-order predicates with two arguments (i.e., two clauses or phrases) and seem to have a freer distribution.

Teaching Implications: Arguments for Presenting Comparatives and Superlatives Separately

Part of the general confusion between comparatives and superlatives may stem from the fact that most ESL/EFL textbooks present them in the same lesson or chapter. From a semantic point of view, it seems more sensible to present comparatives and equatives along with verbs, adjectives, and nominals such as the following, all of which express similarity or difference:

| <i>Verbs</i> | <i>Adjectives</i> ¹² | <i>Nouns</i> |
|---|--|---|
| to differ from NP to { sound feel look } like NP taste seem } to behave like NP | to be different from (than) NP ¹³ to be similar to NP to be comparative ADJ than NP to be as ADJ as NP to be equal to NP to be identical to NP | to be the equivalent (of) NP to be the same NP (as NP) |

John differs from Bill.

Mary is similar to Jane.

John is taller than Bill (is).

Joe's assets are the equivalent of John's.

Jim and Art are the same height.

Comparatives and equatives, in our opinion, can be considered usefully as complex transitive adjectives for the purposes of grammatical analysis.

Superlatives, on the other hand, should be presented in the context of ordinals and ordinal-like prenominal modifiers that occur in the post-determiner position:

| <i>Core Determiner</i> | <i>Post Determiner</i> | <i>Head Noun</i> |
|--|------------------------|---|
| $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \mathbf{the} \\ \mathbf{my} \\ \mathbf{this} \end{array} \right\}$ | $+$ | $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \mathbf{first} \\ \mathbf{second} \\ \mathbf{third} \\ \mathbf{next} \\ \mathbf{last} \end{array} \right\}$ |
| $+$ | $+$ | $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \mathbf{NOUN (that + S)} \\ \mathbf{NOUN (prep NP)} \end{array} \right\}$ |
| core post head noun | | core post head noun |

This is my first course. / This is the best course (that) I have taken.

This exercise is your next assignment. / This exercise is the hardest assignment of the semester.

In other words, we feel that it is useful to classify superlatives grammatically as a type of post-determiner that generally gets expanded with a *that*-clause or prepositional phrase.

Therefore, given all these differences—syntactic and semantic—we feel that it is important for most ESL/EFL students to understand and practice comparatives first, and then, at some later time, superlatives, each in different contexts and in conjunction with the semantically and syntactically related patterns, which we cited previously. Once the two forms have been fairly well established independently, you can combine them in contexts where students can learn to properly distinguish their use.

One noteworthy exception to this suggestion has been brought to our attention by W. Kruse (personal communication). Kruse points out that when ESL/EFL students are speakers of German or some other Germanic language, they are already familiar in their L1 with comparative and superlative forms similar to the English forms and use them in their own language in much the same way that they are used in English. For such students, the main learning problem is a morphological one—that is, they need to learn when to use *-er* versus *more* and when to use *-est* versus *most*. We agree with Kruse that for such students, our reasons for strict segregation of the two constructions at the initial stage of instruction no longer apply. The teacher of such students should concentrate on presenting and practicing, in communicative contexts, the distributional differences between the inflectional forms (*-er*, *-est*) and the corresponding periphrastic forms (*more*, *most*).

Conclusion

This chapter concludes our discussion of degree constructions in English. As we always conclude, there is much more to say about comparatives, equatives, superlatives, and the other degree complements than we have been able to cover in these two chapters. However, we feel that the chapters provide background and a point of departure for further research on degree constructions in English. One obvious suggestion for additional research is that a more extensive, corpus-based analysis of the distribution and functions of *more* versus *-er* and *most* versus *-est* would provide ESL/EFL teachers with valuable information regarding when and how these forms are actually used. Another is the need for additional research on *fewer* versus *less* and *fewest* versus *least* to inform us about the current use of these forms (given that *fewer* and *fewest* seem to be used ever less frequently).

There are also some additional complex constructions with superlatives that could usefully be further explored. Carter and McCarthy (2006), for example, mention the following patterns (p. 770):

1. **It's the most beautiful landscape imaginable.**
2. **[the trip] was designed to inflict the greatest possible suffering.**

These sentences require adjectives like *imaginable*, *conceivable*, *possible*, *thinkable*, etc. In the first sentence, the superlative *most beautiful* modifies the predicate noun *landscape*, which is then followed by the adjective complement *imaginable*. This can be paraphrased as “the most beautiful landscape that one can imagine.” In the second example, the adjective *possible* directly follows and is intensified by the superlative *greatest*; together, they modify the head noun *suffering* and can be paraphrased as “the greatest amount of suffering that is possible.” These more complex constructions involving superlatives are worthy of further consideration. They should be discussed with advanced learners when they appear in authentic discourse.

Teaching Suggestions

1. **Form/Meaning.** In an adaptation of Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988), we suggest that for teaching and practicing superlatives, teachers should find four pictures of buildings and reproduce them for each group of five students. Four students each get a picture that they do not show the others, and the fifth gets a copy of the worksheet with questions such as:

Most stories? Fewest stories? Oldest? Newest? Most windows? Fewest windows?

If necessary, the students first practice questions to ask each other in order to have their group discussions and make their decisions, such as *How many stories does your building have? How old/new does your building look?* Then the group members discuss details of their buildings, and the fifth student records the decisions that the group makes regarding which building should receive the superlative status. At the end, they all look at the four pictures to see if they have made good decisions, and if not, why not.

2. **Form/Meaning.** Comparing statistics about places such as states can also elicit authentic practice of superlatives:

| | <i>Alaska</i> | <i>California</i> | <i>Texas</i> | <i>Vermont</i> |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Area (square miles) | 586,412 | 158,693 | 263,338 | 9,609 |
| Population | 710,000 | 37,254,000 | 25,146,000 | 626,000 |
| Highest point | Mt. McKinley (20,320 feet) | Mt. Whitney (14,494 feet) | Guadalupe Peak (8,751 feet) | Mt. Mansfield (4,393 feet) |
| Year of statehood | 1959 | 1850 | 1845 | 1791 |

Examples: Alaska is the youngest/largest of the four states.

Vermont is the oldest/smallest of the four states. It has the fewest people.

Teachers are encouraged to add data to the chart for other states of interest to the class.

3. **Form.** For presenting a variety of superlative forms in context, P. Le Vasseur (personal communication) suggests that ESL/EFL teachers give their students a handout consisting of several advertisements extracted from newspapers and magazines. In groups, students

are instructed first to identify all the superlative forms and meanings and then to ask each other questions (and to answer them) about the content of the ads. For example:

- a. "The Gillette TRAC II Shaving System. The closest thing to a perfect shave."
- b. "Everyone agrees the only rums worth coming back to are the rums of Puerto Rico. The best-tasting, best-selling rums made."
- c. "New York Life's Best-Seller Policy. It's not our least expensive policy. But, then again, no other life insurance can do quite as many things for you."

4. **Form.** To introduce *so (much) . . . that* degree constructions, the ESL/EFL teacher can present contexts like this one to students:

Salwa is having a bad day at school.
She's sleepy. She can't pay attention to the lecture.
She's hungry. She can't concentrate on the quiz.
The weather is hot. She can't study.

Later in the day, Salwa goes home and tells her roommate about her bad day:

"I was so sleepy (that) I couldn't pay attention to the lecture."

Students continue using this pattern to describe Salwa's day and then share with each other account of bad days that they have had.

5. **Form/Meaning.** Students can practice "*too (much) . . . to*" and "*enough . . . to*" degree constructions if the teacher gives each pair (or small group of students) a situation like this written on a card:

You have to be 18 years old to vote.
Harry is 17 years old.
Ned is 20 years old.

The students must then write down at least one sentence with *too*, one with *enough*, and one with *not enough* based on the information; for example:

Harry is too young to vote.
Harry isn't old enough to vote.
Ned is old enough to vote.

The groups then share their situations and sentences with the class. Feedback is provided by fellow students (and by the instructor, if necessary).

6. **Meaning/Use.** To learn differences in the meaning and distribution of *so*, *too*, and *very*, students can work with two types of modified "cloze" exercises: (a) informal conversation and (b) expository writing.

- a. **X:** I'm not hungry today. It's (1) _____ hot.
Y: Why don't you try this salad? It's (2) _____ good.
X: I have (3) _____ much work to do. I'll just skip lunch.
Y: Don't rush off (4) _____ fast. You could get sick if you skip meals.
- b. The results of yesterday's election are (1) _____ ambiguous at this point that we don't know who won. Both candidates are still making (2) _____ optimistic statements, and even the experts feel that the race is (3) _____ close to call.

The choices the students make in their cloze passages are then discussed by the class.

7. **Meaning/Use.** Ultimately, the ESL/EFL teacher may use exercises that will help students discriminate between comparative and superlative forms. Here are some suggestions for practicing modified cloze exercises in dialog or story form where the correct degree must be supplied for the word indicated:

a. **DIALOGUE.** Use some form of “tall”:

X: Are you (1) _____, or am I?

Y: I don’t know. Let’s ask Lars. He’s (2) _____ than either of us.

X: Yeah. He’s the (3) _____ one in the class.

Note that irregular forms can be practiced this way too.

STORY. Use some form of “good”:

Mr. Jenkins was asked to judge the apple pies at the fair. So he started, and each new one tasted (1) _____ than the previous one. He had a very hard time picking the (2) _____ one.

b. Three-term problems can be used to test comprehension of comparative and superlative forms. The teacher can provide the problems orally or in writing and the students can give a name (orally or in writing) to indicate their answer. For example:

(1) If Bob is taller than Joe and Joe is taller than Mike, who’s the tallest?

(2) If Mary is younger than Nancy, and Nancy is older than Judy, who’s the oldest?

c. To bring out the similarity of content but difference of form and focus between comparatives and superlatives, the teacher can use pictures and data such as were presented in the first and second teaching suggestions. The students would be asked to generate either comparative or superlative sentences using the pictures or the data and then to paraphrase using the other form (if possible); for example:

Student 1: Tom’s building has more stories than mine.

Student 2: Tom’s building is the tallest of the four.

Student 1: Alaska is the largest state (largest of the 50 states).

Student 2: Alaska is larger than the other 49 states.

It should be emphasized that while all superlatives can be paraphrased with a comparative form, not all comparatives (e.g., *Ann runs faster than Harry.*) can be paraphrased with a superlative.

8. **Form/Meaning.** Typically, a daily horoscope contains many tokens of comparatives, superlatives, equatives, and degree complements. Students can be given printed horoscopes, or they can find them online. Then they can work in groups to identify all the degree constructions and produce an alternative horoscope using the same degree forms.

Here are a few slightly modified examples from such a horoscope (the teacher can draw on and adapt from several horoscopes to include as many degree constructions as possible):

Aquarius (Jan. 20–Feb. 18): Remind yourself today that good thoughts can make you a better person.

Pisces (Feb. 19–Mar. 20): Check on your friends who have been too quiet lately.

Aries (Mar. 21–Apr. 19): Do your best to deliver what you promise.

Taurus (Apr. 20–May 20): Be as organized as possible so you can get your work done today.

Exercises

Test your understanding of what has been presented.

1. Provide original sentences that illustrate the following terms. Underline the pertinent word(s) in your examples.
 - a. a comparative used in a superlative sense
 - b. the negative implication of *too* (*much/little*)
 - c. intensifying, nonsuperlative use of *most*
 - d. a marked superlative
 - e. absolute use of *too*
 - f. comparative and superlative uses of *lesser*
2. Why are the following sentences ungrammatical?
 - a. *She's the $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{boringest} \\ \text{boredest} \end{array} \right\}$ person I know.
 - b. *John $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{lives the farthest away} \\ \text{is the elderest} \end{array} \right\}$ of all.
3. In each of the following cases, decide whether the sentence should be completed with a comparative or a superlative form or could be completed with either, and explain why. If both forms are possible, is there a difference in meaning?
 - a. Alex has financial problems, but Joe and Robert don't because they have _____ money.
(more, the most)
 - b. Of the five candidates for president, I voted for Sheila because I definitely think she's _____.
(the best, better)
 - c. After examining several books I finally bought this novel because I felt that it was _____.
(the most interesting one, more interesting than the others)
4. What's the difference?
 - a. She's very young to be a pro tennis player.
 - b. She's too young to be a pro tennis player.

Test your ability to apply what you know.

5. ESL/EFL students have produced the following sentences. What would you tell them?
 - a. *Joe is the older child in a big family.
 - b. *February is the most cold month in my country.
 - c. *The first and important thing of all is studying English.
 - d. *I was worst than my roommate at making friends.
 - e. *This food is too tasty.
6. If you are using an ESL/EFL textbook that presents comparatives and superlatives to beginning-level learners in the same lesson, what will you do?

7. You are using an ESL/EFL textbook that tells your advanced students to use the comparative for two persons or objects and the superlative for three or more persons or objects. One of your students asks you if this rule always works. What will you say?
8. In a newspaper article entitled “The ‘Usefulest’ Adjectives,” William Safire (1980) quotes two famous authors:
- “Surely of all the ‘rights of man’ this right of the ignorant to be guided by the wiser . . . is the indisputablest.” —Thomas Carlyle**
- “ . . . the confoundedest, brazenest, ingeniousest piece of fraud.” —Mark Twain**
- What point do you think Safire was trying to make?

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

For useful descriptive information about degree words and the English superlative, see:

- Bolinger, D. (1972). *Degree words*. The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton.
- Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. (2006). *Cambridge grammar of English*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Huddleston, R., & Pullum, G. K. (2002). *The Cambridge grammar of the English language*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Jespersen, O. (1964). Degree. In *Essentials of English grammar* (pp. 219–229). University, AL: University of Alabama Press.

For corpus-based descriptions of degree complements and superlatives, see:

- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman grammar of spoken and written English*. Harlow, Essex, England: Pearson Education Ltd.

For a generative grammar analysis of most of the degree complements discussed in this chapter, see:

- Celce-Murcia, M. (1972). *A syntactic and psycholinguistic study of comparison in English* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of California, Los Angeles, CA.
- Matushansky, O. (2008). On the attributive nature of superlatives. *Syntax*, 11(1), 26–90.
- Sharvit, Y., & Stateva, P. (2002). Superlative expressions, context, and focus. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 25, 453–504.

For a good discussion of the degree complements formed with *so*, *such*, *too*, and *enough*, see:

- Gary, E. N. (1979). *Extent in English: A unified account of degree and quantity* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

For ESL/ EFL textbooks that offer good suggestions for presenting and practicing superlatives, see:

- Badalamenti, V., & Henner-Stanchina, C. (2007). *Grammar dimensions: Form, meaning, and use 1* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Firsten, R. (2008). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 2*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For exercises integrating the use of comparatives and superlatives, see:

- Carlisi, K. (2008). *Grammar connection: Structure through content 3*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

For good suggestions on how to present and practice degree complements, see:

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Endnotes

1. This notation (i.e., < >) indicates that a given noun (i.e., noun *x*) may occur either before or after *enough*, but not in both positions at the same time.
2. There is one fixed expression where we find *enough* modified by *little*: e.g., “I have little enough time as it is, and now they tell me to do more!” In this idiomatic usage, *little enough* means something like *too little*. There is also the adjective *little*, meaning “small,” which should not be confused with the quantifier that we are discussing here:

Adjective: **She was little enough to climb through the window.**

Quantifier: **We have too little time to finish the work.**

3. We use the term *absolutely* in a very guarded sense here because these *too*'s are not like *very* in that there is always an infinitive complement implied, and this implied complement generally expresses a negative implication:

He drinks too much { **to have good health**
for his own good } . (= He is not in good health.)

They study too little (to succeed academically). (= They are not succeeding.)

4. This rule is adapted from Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin, with Griner (2010, pp. 405–406).
5. There are a few one-syllable adjectives that are exceptional in that they take only periphrastic *more* or *most*: *real*, *right*, *wrong*, and *like* (= similar to).
6. Syllabic [ɹ] in this context generally becomes consonantal when the inflection is added, often changing the syllable structure (gen-tle; gent-lest).
7. Note that in most such cases, it does not seem to make much difference whether *and* or *or* is used as the conjunction following *than*, although a difference in meaning is possible, and additional modifiers are sometimes used to suggest an additive rather than an alternative meaning; for example:

Jill and Ann have more A's than B's and C's put together.

8. Another related meaning of the form *most* that is not strictly superlative is the meaning of the quantifier *most* when used to express the notion of majority; e.g., "Most (of the) voters were in favor of the measure" (i.e., more voters were in favor than those who were not in favor).
9. The forms *one* and *ones* are the noun substitutes that occur most frequently with superlatives; for example:

Jane bought a pound of tomatoes. She selected only the best ones.

I ate the biggest one.

10. The only case where it is difficult to reconstruct an underlying noun is with adverbial use of the superlative; for example:

Roger behaves the most politely (of all the boys).

Ultimately, one might perhaps argue that such a sentence is related to one with a noun paraphrase, and that this relationship accounts for the presence of *the*:

Roger exhibits the most polite behavior (of all the boys).

However, exploring such an analysis in detail is beyond the scope of this textbook.

11. Adverbs or adjectives that use *un-* or some other negative prefix to derive their negative polarity form are different from adjectives and adverbs that have pre-existing polar opposites that are lexically distinct (e.g., *big—little*). Whenever such overt negative prefixes are needed, the tendency is to avoid the derived negative and to use *least* with the stem form (e.g., *least important*) rather than *most* with the derived negative (e.g., *most unimportant*); however, the latter pattern does occasionally occur with negative connotations:

Lester always seems to dwell on the most { **unimportant**
uninteresting } **details.**

12. There are some other examples that also appear to be candidates for adjective constructions that compare:

to be unlike NP

to be like NP

NP1 and NP2 be alike

However, an adjective requires a preposition to take an object (e.g., *to be similar to NP*). Thus, it may be better to analyze *unlike* and *like* as prepositions while *alike* appears to be a special reciprocal form that substitutes for "like each other." In any case, we called attention to one of these in Chapter 34, and they may be useful phrases for your students to learn.

13. The phrase *different than* is acceptable in colloquial American English. In formal situations, *different from* is preferred. Many speakers of British English do not find *different than* grammatically acceptable and some use *different to*, which is ungrammatical to American ears. All dialects seem to accept *different from*.

Conclusion

CHAPTER

36

One of our concerns in writing such a lengthy book is that we run the risk of overwhelming readers with the level of grammatical detail that we have included here. However, we felt that we needed to take this risk for two reasons. First, readers of previous editions have told us that after being students in courses where *The Grammar Book* was the course text, they would refer to it again and again as grammatical questions arose while they were teaching. In other words, although we had not originally intended the book to be used as a reference grammar, that is indeed what many teachers were using it for. We have kept this in mind in our revisions for this edition. Second, one of the not-so-subtle, implicit messages of our text is that language is complex. We felt that we would neither be honoring the complexity of English nor contributing to the professionalization of English teachers if we were to oversimplify our treatment of grammar. Sometimes it surprises people to learn that research regarding English grammar is being actively pursued, the fruits of which are elucidating (and at the same time sometimes stultifying) in their detail.

What we would like, therefore, is for our readers to appreciate the complexity without feeling discouraged by it or developing eyeball glaze. Perhaps it helps to know that we do not expect mastery of all the material that we have presented here. As we have written in Chapter 1, it is our intention that you come away from your reading of *The Grammar Book* having gained a way of looking at language, a knowledge of some facts concerning English grammar, and the awareness and the basic level of skill necessary to be able to analyze its forms, meanings, and uses. You will learn the details about English grammar as you teach English. Indeed, those of you who are just beginning or in the early stage of your teaching career should derive comfort from an old adage with which experienced teachers are well acquainted—that you learn as you teach.

As we also have stated at the beginning of this book, we believe that the aim of language instruction should be additive bilingualism or multilingualism (Ortega, 2013). Consistent with this position, we endorse multilingual classroom practices (Hornberger, 2005). We do not believe that correctness is equivalent to nativeness (Cook, 2002), nor that learner language is incomplete and deficient (Larsen-Freeman, 2014). Further, language is not a self-contained finite system, which has an end state (Larsen-Freeman, 2006), and any language, including one's native language, cannot be said to be fully "acquired" (which suggests a boundedness). In its place, we prefer to think in terms of a language being continually "learned" and "developed" (Larsen-Freeman, 2007; 2011).

We also recognize that English learners these days are likely to participate in many different usage situations where different norms are in play. We have, therefore, called attention to the differences between spoken and written grammar wherever we could. It may

also be true that there is a general reduction in formality in the use of Standard English (Carter, 2014), perhaps spurred by the widespread use of digital media, which allow for an immediacy and intimacy of communication that accompany informality. It is well known, for instance, that the type of writing that is done on social media sites is not consistent with previous norms that have governed the written and oral modalities in the language (Crystal, 2001). Nevertheless, at least one research study has demonstrated that the language used in instant messaging is not unique, in the sense that it reflects the variation and the ongoing process of language change that is happening in other contemporary varieties of English (Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008). As we have noted, even in the absence of technological developments, change is inherent in any dynamic system, and language is certainly one of those systems. To cite one dramatic example, the word *nice* meant “ignorant” in an earlier form of English. In any case, standard language is not invariant, although it is often presented in an idealized way, nor do we think that Standard English is in any danger of disappearing, especially given the reinforcement that it receives from standardized examinations.

It is true, though, that different norms are appropriate for different occasions, and for some learners, occasions to use Standard English is one of them. However, whether to use it or not does not represent a binary choice (Curzan, 2014). The medium, the audience, and the context are always crucial to language choices. Our goal is to make you, and thus your students, more conscious of the choices they have and what exercising a particular choice means, not only in terms of ideational meaning, but also in the construction of their identities as individuals and social beings.

Further, we believe that language is learned in contexts of use; thus, as each learner’s starting point and experience differs, so, too, will the language resources that emerge from diverse situations of use (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). Moreover, no matter what we do or what we encourage our students to do, they will learn according to the time and effort that they are prepared to invest or to the extent that their needs are satisfied. It is important to remember that at a group level, the learning challenge for students with different language profiles may vary due to cross-linguistic influence (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). Thus, where possible, we have included contrastive information about language typology. It is our hope that such information will help you to better understand what linguistic background your students are bringing with them to class and what the nature of their linguistic experience will be as they strive to master English.

As we have made clear, for us, grammar is more than a formal system. It is about making meaning in context-appropriate ways. We need to teach grammar as a resource for making meaning (Liamkina & Ryshina-Pankova, 2012). One way to do this (as we have said many times in this book) is to help students understand the reasons why speakers of a language make the (usually unconscious) choices that they do. Another recurring theme in this book has been that grammar is organic, evolving in a nonlinear way (Larsen-Freeman, 1997), which is why traditional rules don’t always work. The rules are general abstractions, and yet there is a great deal of variation in the constructions they purport to cover (e.g., Taylor, 2012). In the best of all worlds, ESL/EFL students would have sufficient exposure to English in order to figure out the generalities and particularities of the language for themselves, just as those acquiring a first language do implicitly. However, most students do not have the luxury of time, and thus, they are helped by teachers who can give them the necessary guidance, even when the rules of thumb are incomplete.

Of course, another reason that the rules don’t always work is that the perspective that led to their formulation was not sufficiently inclusive. We have tried to provide a very wide perspective on grammar, continually reinforcing the need to seek explanations at all levels of

language, most definitely including the level of discourse. While it may make good science to limit the scope of one's investigation, as teachers, we need to use whatever knowledge and tools are at our disposal. As such, we have drawn upon many different schools of linguistic thought, and especially for this edition, more cognitive, usage-based, systemic-functional, conversational analytic, and corpus-based linguistics, for the insights they afford.

Since it is in the nature of any linguistic inquiry to evolve, doubtless the findings and analyses that we have reported here will be challenged or expanded by additional research. Such challenges are welcome; we certainly do not claim to have written the last word on English grammar. Indeed, as we have indicated many times in this text, there is much yet to be discovered, and we welcome the contributions of researchers working within all schools of thought. We also hope that we have dispelled the myth that all linguistic research is complete and that all is known about English grammar. Much remains to be learned, and we welcome you to that quest. Indeed, encouraging you to conduct your own original research is one of the reasons that we have given you a framework and provided practice in investigating grammar, rather than simply supplying you with a compendium of facts about English.

Finally, it is our sincere wish that you have developed the skill of being able to apply what you have learned in guiding your students' learning, helping them to use grammar accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately—in other words, encouraging their “grammaring.” We also hope that you will feel more confident in your ability to answer your students' grammar questions. Perhaps most importantly, through your adaptations of our teaching suggestions and through your own creative endeavors, we hope that you feel prepared to work with your students on English grammar in pedagogically useful and satisfying ways, and that together with your students, you will find grammar fascinating.

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3. declarative (indicative) e.g., My dog has fleas.
 interrogative e.g., Are you rich?
 imperative e.g., Go to your room!
4. A pragmatic function (e.g., request) does not always correspond to a particular sentence type because there are many different linguistic means of performing a pragmatic function with varying levels of politeness, formality, directness, and so on, which utilize different sentence types. For example:
 Open the window, please. (imperative)
 Could you open the window? (interrogative)
 I'd like you to open the window. (declarative)
5. reference: The woman entered the room. She looked around.
 ellipsis: *A:* When did you arrive?
B: Yesterday. (= I arrived yesterday.)
 substitution: *A:* I'll do all my homework this evening.
B: I hope so.
 conjunction: I haven't done my homework yet; however, I plan to do it soon.
 lexical cohesion: I have been applying to grad schools. I have been spending all my evenings writing essays. (We understand that applying to graduate school usually requires writing essays to accompany an application.)
6. The theme is less important than the rheme in terms of its information-bearing status: the theme only identifies what the sentence will be about, while the rheme contains what the speaker wants to say about the theme and thus carries more information. Also, the theme contains old information, the rheme new.
7. Do on your own. Answers will vary.
8. Do on your own. Answers will vary.
9. a. *Out of nowhere* is the theme of the sentence, making the unexpectedness of the event the focus of the sentence. This unusual (rather literary) word order (PrepP V S) makes it a marked sentence, since the subject of the sentence is not the theme and, in fact, follows the verb.
 b. The passive voice is used to make the recipient of the action (*I*) the theme, not the agent (*my parents*).
 c. The phrase "concerning homework" has been used to place the object of the sentence in the theme position, thus achieving a topic-comment structure similar to that found in some Asian languages. The object of the sentence (*homework*) is then repeated as a pronoun (*it*) in the main clause. In this case, the passive voice would sound very unnatural as a means to achieve this effect.
10. Do on your own. Answers will vary.

Chapter 3: Lexicogrammar

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. a. verb requiring a locative prepositional phrase b. determiner requiring an uncountable noun c. conversion d. change-of-state verb</p> <p>e. compound word f. derivational affix g. inflectional affix h. transitive adjective i. semantic field (education)</p> <p>j. transitive verb k. verb with three arguments l. irregular plural</p> <p>m. lexical phrase n. durative verb o. verb-direct object collocation p. co-occurrence with a preposition q. quotative verb r. polysemy</p> | <p>I <u>placed</u> the cup on the table. He doesn't have <u>much</u> patience. I already <u>salted</u> the vegetables. The stores <u>close</u> early on Saturday. (Sam <u>closes</u> the stores on Saturday.) We saw a <u>horse race</u> last night. David could use some <u>excitement</u>. He <u>likes</u> me. Susan is <u>fond</u> of Jim. The <u>university students</u> helped the local <u>elementary school pupils</u> with their <u>homework</u>. We <u>enjoy</u> spicy food. Jane <u>sent</u> a letter to her mother. There are millions of <u>sheep</u> in New Zealand. I teach <u>English as a second language</u>. I <u>sleep</u> in the same room as my sister. I was <u>given advice</u> on how to apply. She is <u>married to</u> Henry. And he <u>goes</u>, "I don't care!" She's too <u>soft</u> with the students. This is a very <u>soft</u> pencil.</p> |
|--|---|

2.
 - a. *Lurk* is a verb that requires an adverb of location (e.g., *in the alley*)—a syntactic problem.
 - b. *Fascinate* requires an animate object (a higher-order animal or human)—a semantic problem.
 - c. The determiner *these* modifies plural nouns only—a syntactic problem (agreement).
 - d. The plural ending has been attached to the part of the compound word that can be a noun on its own (*break*). Once a compound is formed, it should be treated as a single unit; thus, the plural ending should be attached as usual to the end of the word.
 - e. An adjective from the verb *trust* has been generated by attaching the suffix *-ful*. While *-ful* is an adjectival suffix that can be used with *trust*, it is inappropriate in this context. Adjectives with the suffix *-ful* usually mean that the noun described by the adjective is the agent associated with the verb that forms the base of the adjective. However, in this example, the noun described (*friend*) would be the object in the intended meaning (i.e., “can be trusted,” rather than “trusts”). *Trustworthy* would be the correct choice.
 - f. This is an attempt to create a new noun from *favorite* in a sentence structure where *preference* would be the correct choice. Although *favoritism* is a correct noun form, it carries a strong negative connotation and belongs to a different semantic field (concerning the treatment of humans).
3.
 - a. *Information* is a mass noun in English and therefore does not take the plural *-s* or the determiner *many*.
 - b. *From my point of view* is the usual idiom. However, *in my opinion* may also be used. These are fixed lexical phrases.
 - c. *Remodeling* is questionable here since it is usually used in the context of houses, rooms, or buildings, but not streets.
 - d. *Firecrackers* is the correct word, since “pyrotechnics” is referred to here. Although *crackerfires* follows the rules of compounding, it is not a word in English. If there were such a word, it might refer to fires made by people burning crackers, since for noun/noun compounds, the first noun usually functions as a descriptor of the second noun.
 - e. The student may have been trying to form a verb from the noun *passion*. The only verb that can be so formed is *impassioned*, which may be too strong for the context. *Fascinated* may be a better choice (and may have been intended but phonologically confused). Rephrasing is another alternative: *Photography has been a passion of mine since I was a child*.
 - f. *Solutions* collocates with *found*, not *met*.
 - g. The correct preposition collocation for *aware* is *of*, not *to*.
 - h. *By pure chance* would be the more idiomatic lexical phrase, but *fortune* is a close synonym of *chance*, making it marginally acceptable.
4. These verbs are all in the same semantic field but have distinct differences in their exact meanings. For example, *look* is more intentional than *see*, which can be nonvolitional. *Look* also differs grammatically since it co-occurs with the preposition *at*. *Watch* implies some duration; *stare* also does, but often with a negative connotation. A simplified semantic feature analysis in the form of a chart would be useful to summarize the differences for students. These particular words also lend themselves well to mime to illustrate the differences.
5. *Pretty* is polysemous, and therefore students need to know that this same word can have different meanings in different contexts. While *pretty* is often used in the semantic field of beauty, it can also be used as an intensifier with words like *soon*, *quickly*, or *good*. It is not as strong as *very* but belongs to the same semantic field.
6. Both *owing to* and *due to* have the same meaning, being used to give a reason. Both can be used in initial position in a sentence; for example,

Owing to unforeseen circumstances, I will not be able to make the meeting.
Due to unforeseen circumstances, I will not be able to make the meeting.

However, only *due to* can be used following *be* in a sentence; for example,

My failure was due to laziness.
*My failure was owing to laziness.
7. **Keyboard-** the letters and numbers used to write messages on a typewriter or computer; the black and white notes used to make music (piano or other keyboard instrument).
Whiteboard- a board on a wall with a white surface used to write or draw on with colored markers.
Chessboard- a board with alternating light and dark squares used for playing the game of chess.
Ironing board- a flat padded surface raised on legs that is used for ironing/pressing clothes.
Snowboard- a special board that one stands on with both feet to go down snow-covered hills.
Clipboard- a flat board with a clip at the top to hold papers.

Chapter 4: Copular Verbs and Subject-Verb Agreement

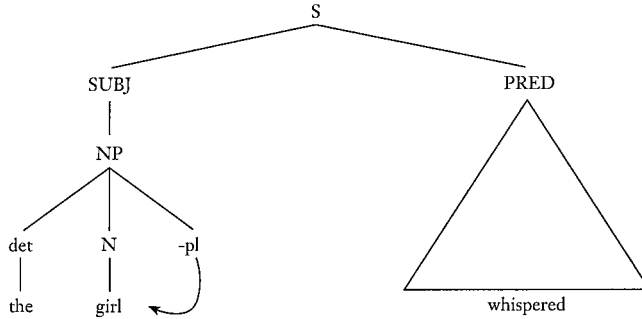
1.
 - a. copula *be* Marina del Rey is an attractive harbor.
 - b. a copular verb other than *be* She seems nice enough.
 - c. an auxiliary function of *be* David was allowed to conduct research on the patients who were in a coma.

Chapter 5: Word Order and the Phrase Structure Rules for the Subject of a Sentence

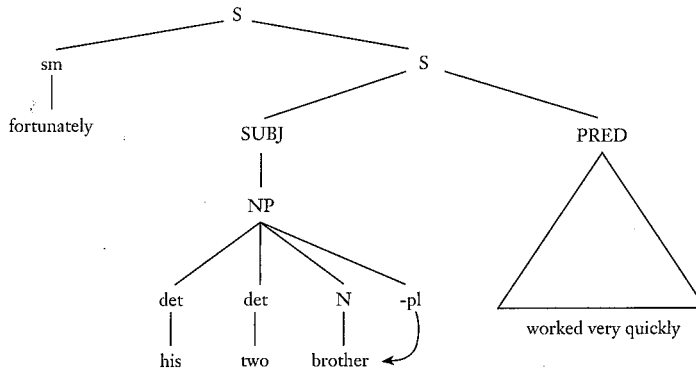
1. a. noun phrase
- b. prepositional phrase
- c. subject
- d. predicate
- e. adjective phrase
- f. adverb modifying adjective
- g. singular determiner
- h. plural determiner

A short, sharp knock is usually sufficient.
 The captain of the team is Ralph.
The student completed the work at home.
 The student completed the work at home.
 The bashful little girl entered the room.
 A very little girl entered the room.
This example is better.
Several boys didn't come to class.

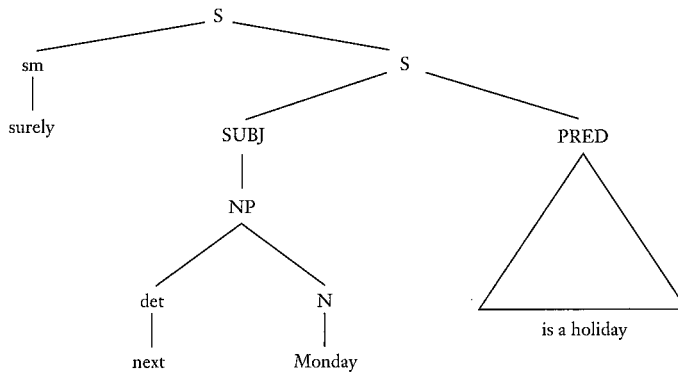
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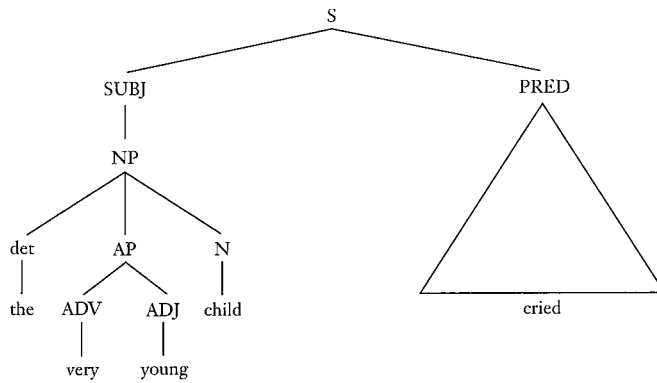
2. b.



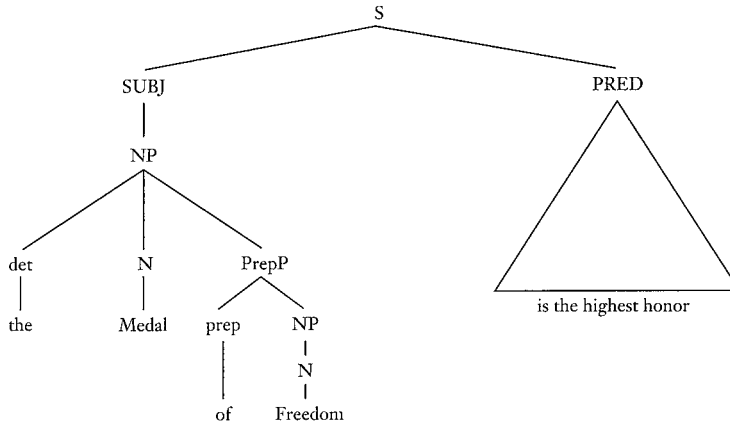
2. c.



2. d.



2. e.

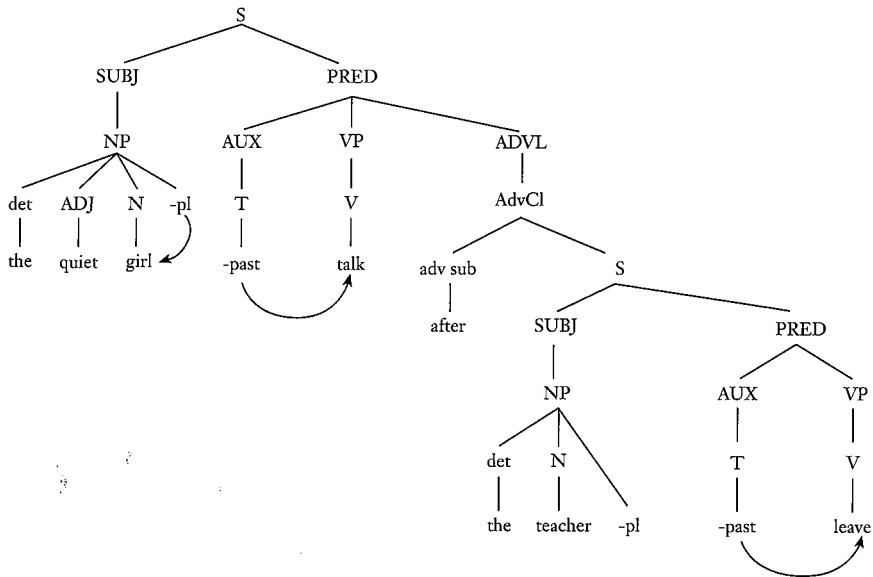


3. a. The order of the noun and the adjective has been reversed. It should be 'black ink' not 'ink black.'
- b. After the conjunction *because*, a complete clause or a prepositional phrase (such as *of the rain*) is required. In the absence of a preposition, a subject (such as *it*) is needed to make a complete clause following *because*.
- c. The plural determiner *those* can precede only a plural noun, and the verb also has a plural inflection; therefore, the noun *woman* should be in the plural form, *women*.
4. a. *My name is Alison* is unmarked. The marked version *Alison is my name* could be used to correct what someone else just said, *Alison is my name, not Alice*.
- b. *I drink coffee, but I don't drink tea* is unmarked. The marked order *Coffee I drink, but tea, I don't* could be used to state in strong contrastive terms the beverage that the speaker does drink versus the one he does not drink.
- c. *I live in a yellow house* is unmarked. The marked word order in *I live in a house yellow like the sun* allows for an expansion of the adjective phrase to describe the house's shade of yellow somewhat poetically. Note that **I live in a house yellow* would not be acceptable. Nor would **I live in a yellow-like-the-sun house*.
5. Two orders are possible for these three words in English:
 - Everyone likes chocolate. SVO (unmarked)
 - Chocolate everyone likes. OSV (marked)
 Other languages might permit SOV:
 - Everyone chocolate likes.
 Or, VSO:
 - Likes everyone chocolate.

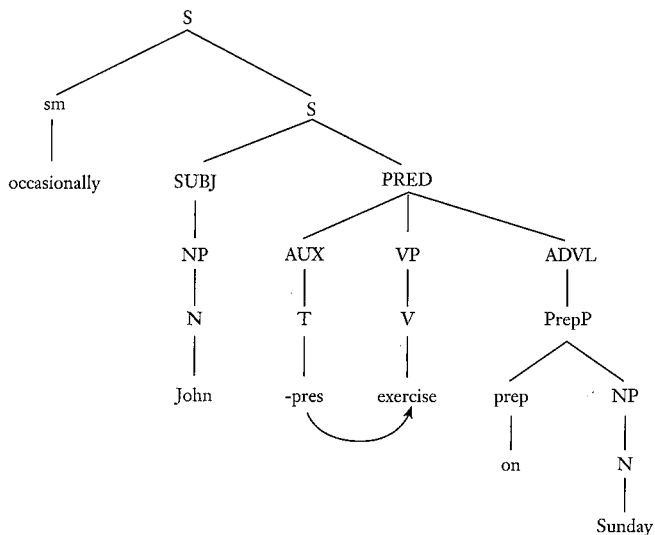
Chapter 6: More Phrase Structure Rules: The Predicate of a Sentence

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------|--|
| 1. a. | imperative | <u>Leave</u> it alone! |
| b. | modal | I <u>might</u> stay home and study tonight. |
| c. | verb with two objects | He <u>showed me the</u> basement. |
| d. | adverb clause | I came <u>because you asked me</u> . |
| e. | phrasal modal | I <u>have to</u> return the book to the library. |
| f. | perfect aspect | Sue <u>has worked</u> here for seven years. |
| g. | progressive aspect | We <u>are talking</u> about the accident. |
| h. | adverb phrase | She dances <u>very gracefully</u> . |

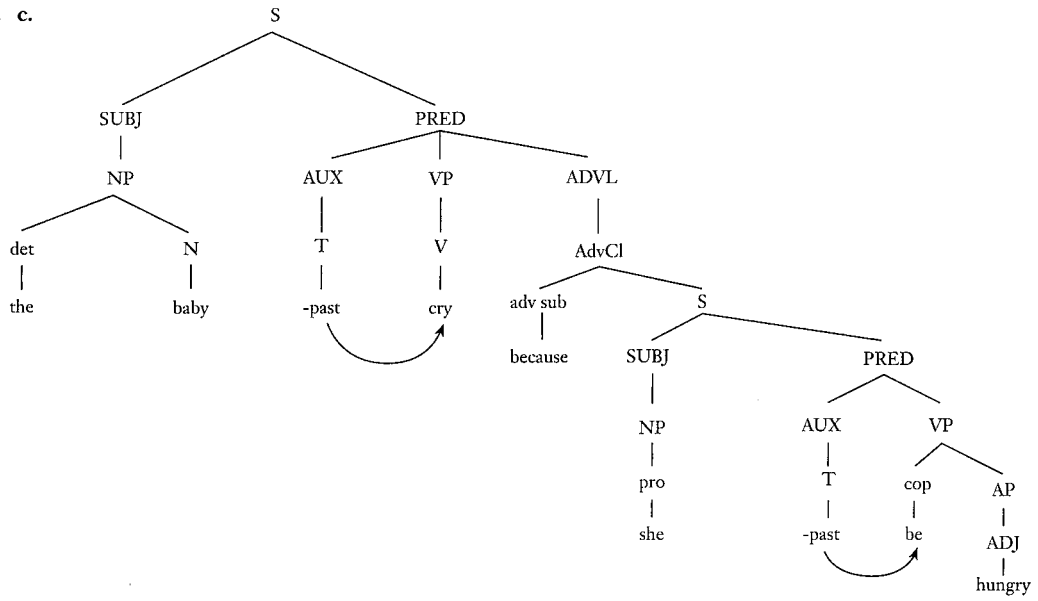
2. a.



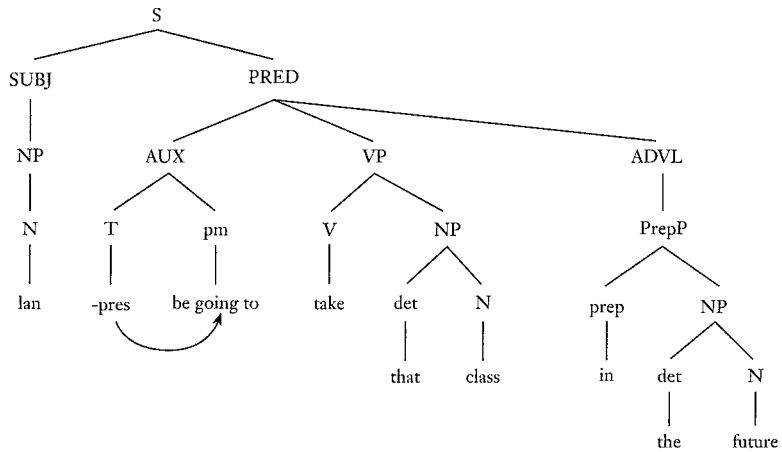
2. b.



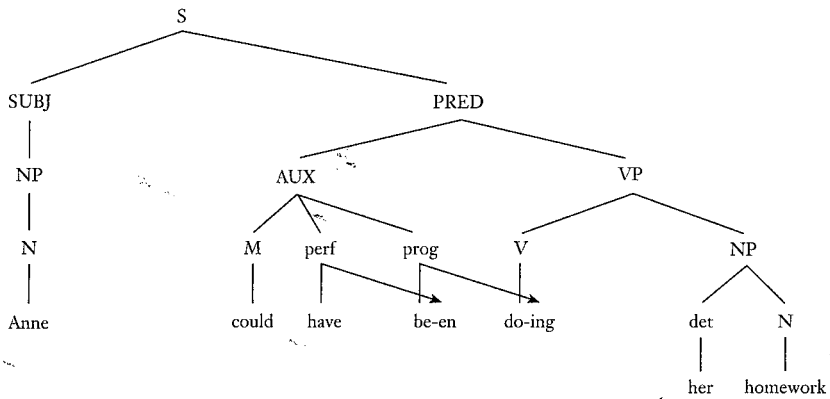
2. c.



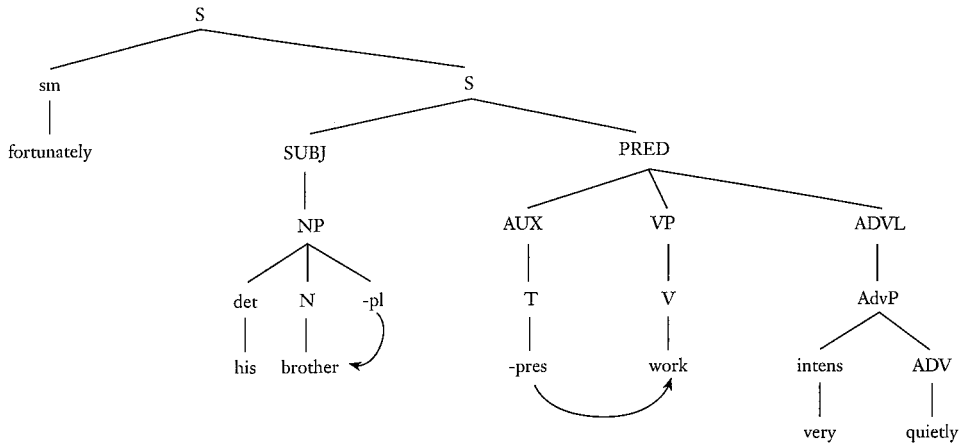
2. d.



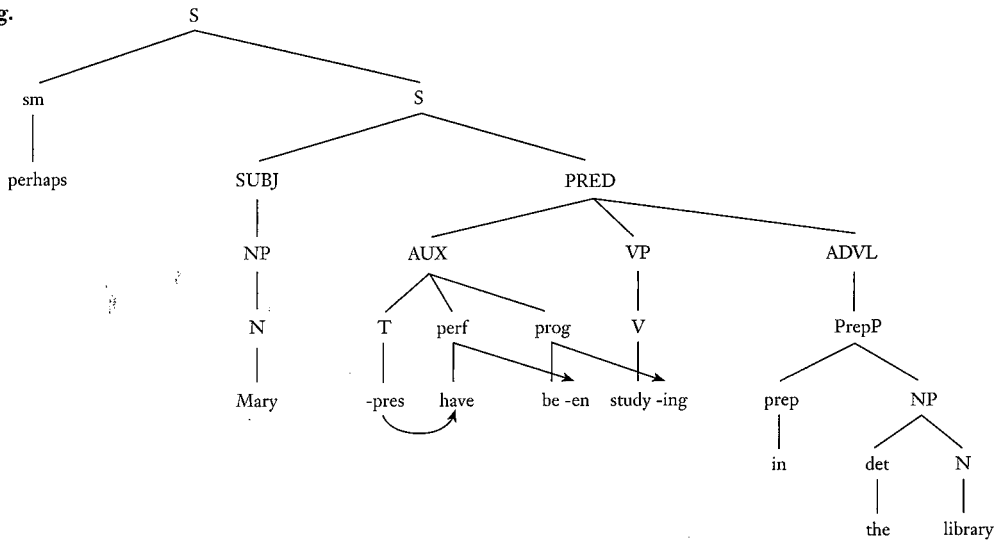
2. e.



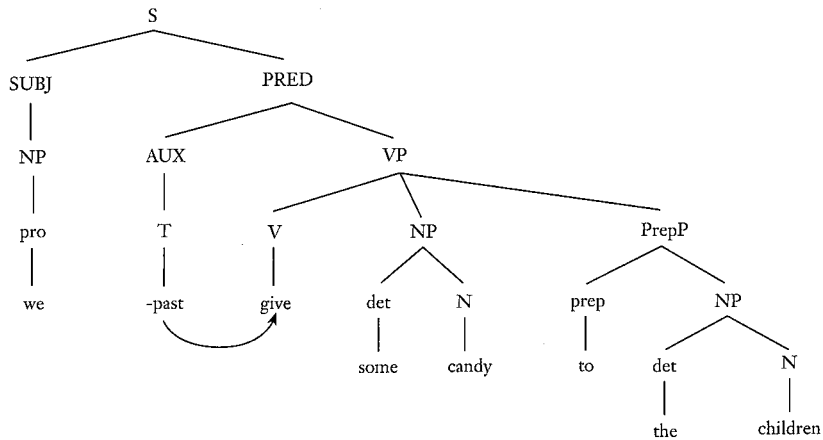
2. f.



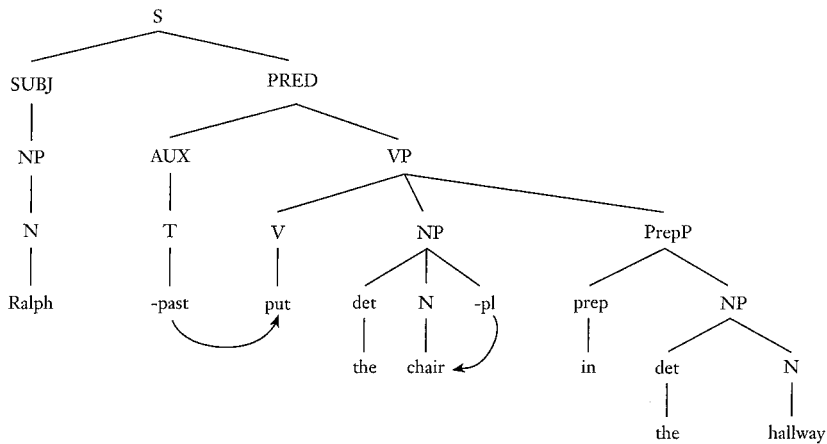
2. g.



2. h.



2. i.



3. Do on your own. Answers will vary.

4.
 - a. Verbs in sentences with modal auxiliaries are tenseless.
 - b. Perfect aspect consists of two components: a form of *have* and the past participle. The *have* auxiliary is missing from this sentence.
 - c. Progressive aspect consists of two components: a form of *be* and the suffix *-ing*, which should be attached to the main verb here: (*jump* → *jumping*).
 - d. *Put* is a verb that requires an adverbial of location after the direct object. For example, *Sarah put the books on the table*.
 - e. Adverbs of manner cannot precede direct objects in English; *Lou speaks French fluently* is the correct order.
 - f. Modal verbs cannot be inflected for tense; *Megan can speak Arabic* is the correct form.
5. Both learners need to learn that the progressive has two parts: *be* + *-ing*. The required form of *be* precedes the verb, and the *-ing* is attached to the next verb in the sentence. Learner (a) needs to have the use of *be* emphasized, and learner (b) needs to have the use of the *-ing* suffix emphasized.
6. English can, of course, express future time, but has no “future tense” in the structural sense since verbs are not inflected in English for future as they are for present (*-s* or zero) and past (*-ed*). English has a number of ways to express the future, including *will*, *be going to*, and the simple present or present progressive with future time adverbials (e.g., *tomorrow*).
7. The *-en* inflection for the past participle occurs with many highly frequent verbs (e.g. *seen*, *written*, *given*, *spoken*, etc.). Thus a native speaker might misspeak and use *-en* to form a past participle on an irregular verb that doesn’t actually take the *-en* form but forms the past participle another way.
8. All three time adverbials are derived from prepositional phrases. The difference is the presence or the absence of the preposition. In (a) it is obligatorily present, in (c) it is optional (see d), and in (b) it is obligatorily absent. We discuss reasons for these differences in Chapter 21.
9. The locative noun *home* as well as some other locative nouns like *uptown*, *downtown*, and *overseas* are not preceded by a preposition when they follow a verb of motion or direction such as *go*, *walk*, *drive*, etc. Such nouns may, however, take a preposition when they occur after a verb of state (e.g. *John is at home*).

Chapter 7: The Tense-Aspect System

1.

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| a. simple future | I <u>will stay</u> here until I find a permanent apartment. |
| b. present perfect | He <u>has tried</u> every means possible to get the door open. |
| c. past progressive | Stella <u>was making</u> a lemon pie when I called her. |
| d. past perfect | I <u>had finished</u> typing the documents one hour before my boss came to check them. |
| e. stative verb | This small box <u>contains</u> all the jewelry that she has. |
| f. simple present | I <u>smell</u> garlic in this salad. |
| g. accomplishment verb | He <u>has written two novels</u> in two months. |
| h. present perfect progressive | She <u>has been making</u> the opening speech at the association’s annual meeting for four years. |
2. No. Both sentences have the same ordering of events. The use of *before* makes the order explicit without necessitating the use of the past perfect. It is in the absence of such clear temporal markers that the past perfect becomes essential to express the order. Used here, it does place more emphasis on the prior nature of “finishing homework.”

3. The use of *since* implies that something started at a definite time in the past and has continued until now. This notion of such duration is what the present perfect expresses and is what distinguishes it from the simple past:

*I did this since 1960.

I have done this since 1960.

4. a. The first sentence with the present perfect talks about an experience that was completed, but the second one with the present perfect progressive implies that the action of reading is still an ongoing process.
b. The present tense here is used for a permanent situation—that is, this is Stan's permanent job—while the sentence with present progressive suggests that Stan is doing the job only on a temporary basis.
c. The question in the past tense is a definite query and requires some shared knowledge of the timeline on which the event in the question occurred. For example, such a question could be asked of somebody who was speaking about the time when they were in New York.

The second question uses the present perfect of the same verb (*go*) and could thus be assumed to be the indefinite equivalent of the same question without presuming shared knowledge. However, *go* behaves irregularly in this respect; in fact, the appropriate indefinite question would be *Have you been to...?* In contrast, the question *Have you gone to...?* implies that the person is still in New York and thus is unlikely to be asked of the person who may have gone. Compare the following sentences, which could appear in written notes:

I've gone to the mall. (I haven't returned yet; I am still there)

I've been to the mall. (I went and returned)

In another interpretation of *Have you gone/been...?*, one can also be asking if the addressee has ever (in his or her life) gone/been to Yankee Stadium.

5. a. Present perfect is incompatible with a specific past time adverbial like *last Saturday*, which should go with the past tense since it reports a specific action at a specific time in the past.
b. Stative verbs do not normally take the progressive unless the verb implies agency on the part of the subject, such as in *You're being a fool*, or a gradual change of state, such as *I'm hearing the music better now*.
c. This sentence sounds strange because *will* expresses future intention at the moment of speaking. In this case, the speaker has no control over the action. The use of *be going to* would be correct since it refers to an imminent action related to the evidence available at the present time.
d. Even though it may not seem logical, the present tense is conventionally required (i.e., *When Larry comes . . .*) in subordinate clauses of time or condition when the main clause contains a future time verb.
e. It is difficult to know what the student intended here, but in any case, the intransitive verb *live* has incorrectly been used in a passive construction (*was lived*). The correct structure depends on the meaning intended: if Phyllis is still living with her parents, the present perfect (*has lived*) should be used.

If Phyllis no longer lives with her parents, the past progressive (*was living*) or the simple past (*lived*) could be used; the past progressive would make it sound more temporary and the simple past more permanent.

6. In the first sentence, *now* may refer to the time when he habitually goes to the store or a time previously mentioned in the discourse. In the second sentence, the present perfect entails a resultant state: *you* did something that has relevance now, hence the use of *now*, which has emphatic meaning in initial position here.
7. By definition, stative verbs do not involve change; they imply a stable situation that is assumed to last more or less indefinitely. The four verbs mentioned here, however, usually refer to a limited duration of time and commonly occur with progressive aspect, as shown in the following two examples, which convey the same proposition:

A: What's wrong?

B: *My nose itches.* versus *My nose is itching.*

While the first response describes the situation more objectively and the second one sounds more interactive, personal, and affective, there may be no real difference in terms of time duration, which is why these four verbs cannot be classified as stative verbs in the strictest sense.

8. For some speakers of American English, these sentences are synonymous; however, other speakers feel that the first sentence reflects the speaker's point of view (i.e., the speaker just heard the news and wants to know if the listener just heard it too). On the other hand, the second sentence is more likely spoken with the listener's perspective in mind (i.e., the listener looks surprised or shocked, so the speaker tries to show empathy and asks if the listener has just heard the news). A discourse analysis would have to be conducted to determine whether such an analysis is supported and whether there are other differences.
9. In the first example, the two forms both express the meaning of *surviving* or *overcoming*. In the second example, *has got* signals stative possession (= *has*), whereas in the third, *has gotten* means *has obtained* and conveys the sense of an accomplishment.
10. The first sentence uses the stative verb *bear* and thus implies that the perception of the melody is not the result of any action on the part of the person but something that has been happening to the person involuntarily. For example, it may be a popular melody that is playing on every radio and in every store. The unusual use of the present progressive with a stative verb emphasizes the repetitiveness of the state rather than reporting a current state.

The verb *listen* is the active counterpart of *bear* and thus implies that the person has made a point of listening to the melody repeatedly—that is, has taken some action so as to hear it. For example, the person may have bought a new CD, or may have been studying the melody, and for this reason is intentionally playing it over and over.

Chapter 8: Modal Auxiliaries and Related Phrasal Forms

1. a. phrasal modal I am about to go now.
 b. social use of a modal Would you close the window?
 c. logical probability meaning of a modal This bridge may collapse in an earthquake.
 d. a combination of more than one modal You may have to arrive early.
 or phrasal modal
 e. polite form of a request Could you drop me off at my apartment?
 f. literal question with a phrasal modal Are you able to read that sign?
2. The sentence is ambiguous since *may* could mean either that his mother has given her permission for him to go or that his mother was commenting on the possibility of his going.
3. a. *Must be* makes a present inference; *must have been* makes a past inference.
 b. *Would you* is a softer, more polite form of the request than *will you*, which could also be a literal question (i.e., are you willing to help?).
 c. The first sentence implies that the action took place; the second implies that it did not.
 d. *May* expresses possibility. *Must* expresses strong inference—the speaker is sure of the conclusion drawn.
 e. *Should* implies advisability. *Had better* is more insistent, almost a threat, with overtones of unpleasant consequences if the suggestion is not complied with.
4. *That might not be important* expresses low probability of the truth of the negative assessment (as do both the affirmative sentences); in contrast, *That couldn't be important* expresses high probability that the negative assessment is true.
5. a. A modal verb followed by a modal verb is not a grammatical sequence in Standard English (although some modal + modal combinations occur in some regional dialects in the United States).
 b. In questions, *may* is used to ask for permission. If the pronoun were changed from *you* to *I*, the sentences would be grammatical because the speaker is seeking permission to do something. As it stands, *can* (asking about the possibility of performing the action) and *will* (asking about the willingness of the person to perform the action) are possible modals to use in this request. Use of *could* or *would* makes the request polite.
 c. *Should* is used to give advice for future action. The perfect form, *should have studied*, is needed here because the past time adverbial *last term* indicates the advice is “hindsight”—referring to past time.
 d. The common co-occurrence of modal verbs with *be* leads some students to overgeneralize and to insert *be* after every modal. In addition, the main lexical verb *reach* must follow the modal, without *to*, although an adverb may be interposed (*easily*), unless the passive, perfect, or progressive is used; for example, “They could easily reach the goal.”
 e. A modal verb must be followed by the main lexical verb without *to*.
 f. A modal verb must be followed directly by a verb. The copula *be* needs to precede the adjective *good*.
 g. The choice of register is the problem here. With the polite markers of *excuse me* and *Mr.*, the choice of *gotta* is too informal. The modal *should* or the phrasal modal *need to* would be more appropriate.
 h. *Would* is used in the question as a politeness marker, but it cannot take this meaning in a declarative response (where it carries a conditional meaning). The correct response would be simply *Of course* or *Of course I will*, if a modal is used.
6. Both (a) sentences are polite requests for information, but in the first question, the speaker is asking whether the addressee is able to fulfil the request, whereas in the second, s/he assumes the addressee is able to comply and is querying his or her willingness to do so.

The first sentence in (b) is ambiguous in the same way as was the sentence in Exercise 2 above (probability or permission) whereas the second is unambiguously expressing logical probability referring to the past (i.e., that it is possible that Joe went).

The first sentence in (c) is the speaker's own suggestion that Sam introduce the guest, whereas the second presupposes that Sam has already been asked or has even agreed to introduce the guest but expresses some doubt that he will actually do so.

7. *Could* is not used to refer to ability or possibility with a human agent performing a specific punctual action with a specific recent past time adverbial, such as *last night*. It is possible, however, to use it if the subject is a perceiver or experiencer:

I (could/was able to) see many stars in the sky last night.

Moreover, it is possible to use *could* with both specific and general time adverbials in the remote past:

I could read when I was 3 years old.

Note that where a preceding main clause clearly establishes past time, *could* can function like *was/were able to* in an embedded clause in a way that it cannot in an independent clause:

- Compare: *I could visit him last week.
I was able to visit him last week.
- with: I was glad that I could visit him last week.
I was glad that I was able to visit him last week.

In the negative, these distribution problems are not as complicated. In all the contexts, *couldn't* and *wasn't/weren't able to* are possible paraphrases. We can say "I couldn't pick up the tickets last night" because the specific, punctual action referred to was not accomplished.

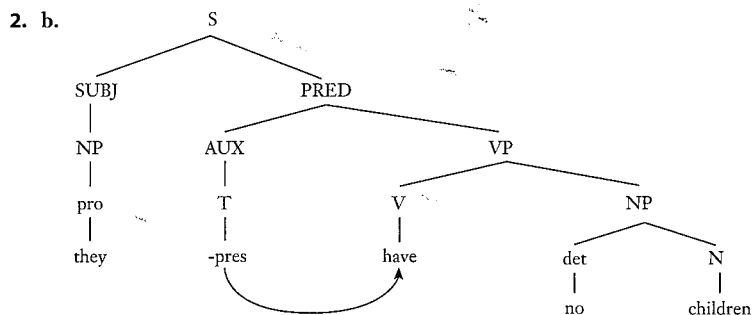
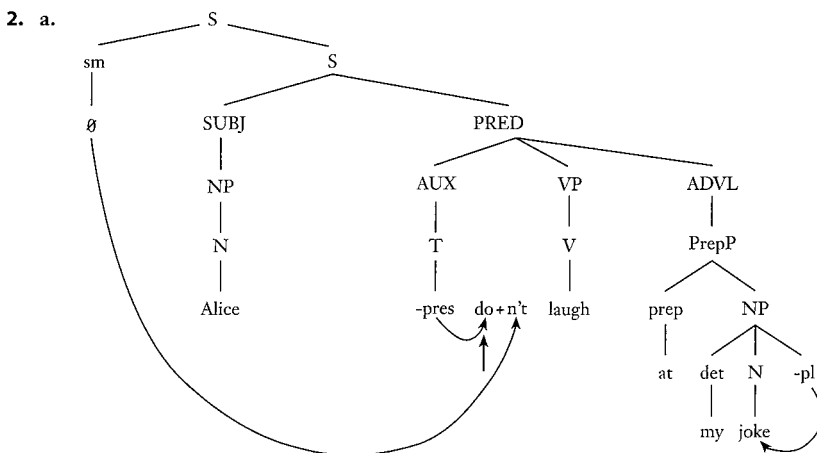
Chapter 9: The Tense-Aspect-Modality System in Discourse

1. a. historical present . . . and suddenly, I fall down an open manhole.
b. backgrounding tense I went to the Grand Canyon last year. It's immense.
c. past time axis Cynthia had worked on her thesis for two years before she finally finished it. Then, she got a good job almost immediately.
d. future time plus progressive aspect I will be staying there for three years.
e. interactive use of present perfect I saw *Gone with the Wind* last night. Have you ever seen it?
f. frame-elaboration pattern for
(i.) present habitual narrative I've studied piano for four years. My playing is pretty good now. I practice every day.
(ii.) past habitual narrative I used to talk on the phone for hours. I'd phone all my friends and talk for an hour with each one. Dave'd get really angry.
(iii.) future scenario I'm going to take night classes next year. I'll enroll for two classes. I'll have to get my husband to do the cooking.
2. I see him in sentence (a) expresses present habitual activity, whereas in (b) it is the historical present and thus expresses a specific event in the past.
3. Present description There's a man . . . It is five years to the day since he began hitting me on the head. . . .
Change to simple past to describe past event At first I couldn't stand it;
Change to past habitual now I've grown accustomed to it.
Present perfect frame for previous past sequence (signalling change from past to present)
Return to present description I don't know his name. I know he's an ordinary man . . .
Change to simple past for past narrative I met him one sultry morning five years ago.
Change to past continuous to provide setting for past narrative (backgrd) I was sitting peacefully on a bench . . .
Return to simple past to continue past narrative All of a sudden I felt something touch my head. It was this same man
Return to present description (background) who now . . . keeps striking me blows with his umbrella.
Change to simple past to continue past narrative That first time I turned around full of indignation
Change to generic present tense to describe (I become terribly annoyed when I'm bothered while reading the paper);
Return to simple past to continue past narrative he went right on, calmly hitting me.
4. There is a greater feeling of intimacy when the simple past is changed to the historical present, which would reflect a closer relationship between the mother and daughter than is expressed in the original, where the simple past indicates psychological distance, which is not surprising given that the mother deserted her.
5. The first instance of the past perfect (*Nobody had seen one*) is the basic use of the tense to signal something in the past that occurred prior to something else in the past; namely, the event the author is narrating. The second instance (*I'd rediscovered the Lotana blue*) is a rhetorical use of the past perfect by the author to signal something of great significance to the reader. This second use can only be understood at the discourse level whereas the first use can be understood at the sentence level.
6. The text begins firmly grounded in the past axis. The first sentence is a modal in the past (*could have been*) but the relative clause gives background in the simple present (*stands*). The next sentence gives results occurring prior to 1982 in the past perfect tense (*had left*) and is followed by elaboration in the simple past (*wandered*), modified by an adverbial participle (*living*). The next sentence starts with "In 1969" and is once again in the simple past (*determined, had*). The quotations that follow and the reporting verb *recall* are also in the simple past (*was, recalled, was, stayed*). Then there is a bit of background in the simple present (*We're situated in a basin*) followed by a return to the simple past narrative in the passive voice (*was trapped*). The following quotes all continue in the simple past (*was, said, was, was, had, was*). The final paragraph moves us back into the present axis with a change marked by the present perfect (All that *has changed* now.). The remainder of the text continues in the present axis with the simple present tense alternating with the present perfect (*is, have been torn down*). There is, however, one use of the past perfect in a relative clause to give background in past time about the waterfront (*had once been used* for slag heaps). However, this situation has since changed, with the change once again being expressed in the present axis (*is now lush and green*).

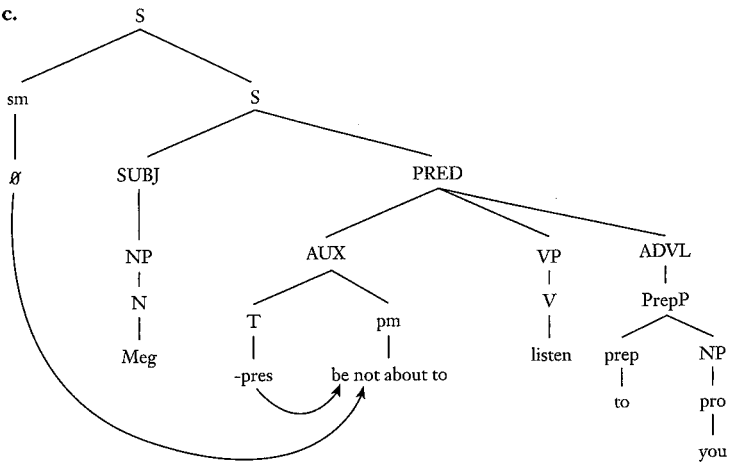
7.
 - a. The use of *had* in the first clause is awkward; *has* would be better so that the entire sentence is in the present axis.
 - b. There is no reason to use the past perfect (*had affected*) in the relative clause. The simple past tense should be used for each verb in this sentence (*was, affected, thought*).
 - c. This sentence is problematic because it starts with simple past (*learned*), then shifts to present tense (*realize*) and then goes back to the past (*was*). Since the entire sentence is about the past, the second verb should also be simple past (*realized*). The first verb could have been past perfect (*had learned*) but this is not necessary because of the presence of “after.”
 - d. There are several problems here: with a specific date, 1991, the first verb should be simple past (*came*), not present perfect. Then the second verb should be present perfect to show temporal duration over time (*have been*), not simple present. The next verb (*have*) continues the present but if we consider the entire text, it is clear the writer wants to refer to the past, so the verb should be simple past (*had*). Once the writer uses “used to” in the final sentence, it is much better to elaborate on this in the next clause with “would” (*but I would hate it*) instead of repeating “used to.”
8. Her tense usage is correct here. She needs to understand the justification for the different tenses she has used so that she can feel more confident. The details of the first sentence are correctly given in the past tense since a specific past time (the period following 1978) is referred to. The present perfect tense in the second sentence signals a change from the past that is still in progress (*has become*) and provides a frame for the present tense narrative that follows (*are oppressed, do not need, do not have to be*).
9. *Be going to* in the second clause of (b) expresses more personal engagement; *will* in (a) seems to express the purpose, while *be going to* in (b) seems to express more confidently the outcome expected by the speaker.

Chapter 10: Negation

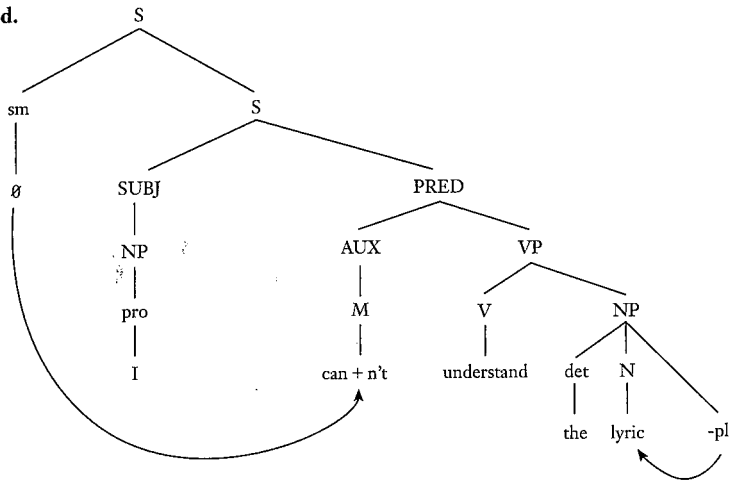
1.
 - a. sentence-level negation
 - b. phrasal negation
 - c. affixal negation
 - d. *do* support
 - e. *not* contraction
 - f. *no* determiner
 - g. negative equative
 - h. negative indefinite pronoun
- I was not sure about the outcome.
 Fiona decided not to call Richard again.
 The reasons for the accident are unimportant.
 She doesn't care about her appearance.
 The experiment wasn't satisfactory.
 They had no hope of success.
 My book is not as thick as yours.
 Her performance leaves nothing to be desired.



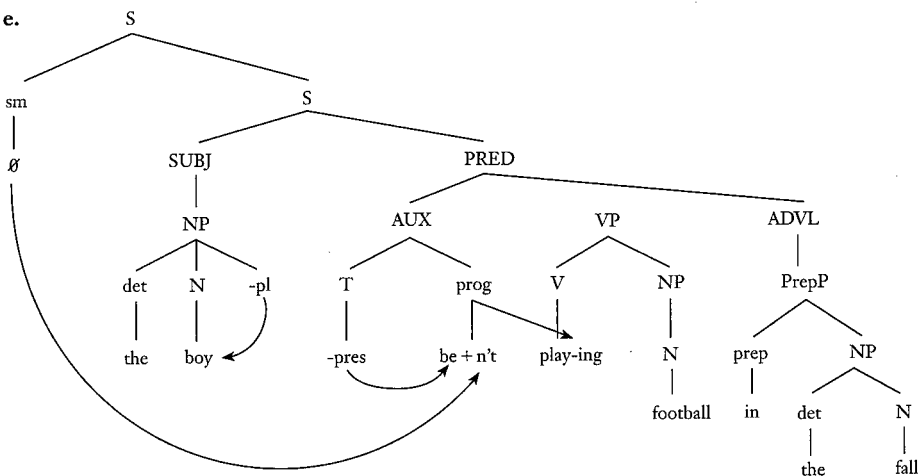
2. c.



2. d.



2. e.



3. a. All three sentences are examples of sentential negation and convey the same proposition—"It is not the case that Sam is working these days,"—but the uncontracted version is used mainly in formal contexts, such as in written English, and gives prominence to the negative. On the other hand, the contracted ones can be heard in more informal contexts, such as in spoken English, where sentences with uncontracted *not* (like the second one) give emphasis to the negation.
- b. The first sentence with a negative polarity adjective in a comparative sounds more direct than the other with a positive polarity adjective in a negative equative, which can be used by writers/speakers wishing to be more indirect or tactful.
- c. Sentences with *not*-negation (like the first sentence) are more prevalent in speech, while *no*-negation appears more often in formal or written contexts.
- d. The first sentence is more prevalent in writing than in speech. In speech the nonaffixal (i.e., sentential) negation in the second sentence is more common.
4. a. *Do* support is required in this negative sentence, and the negative particle should be *not* instead of *no*, i.e. *That boy doesn't like me*.
- b. The correct negative particle, *not*, is used here, but operator addition (*do*), inflected for the tense intended, is required before the particle.
- c. The wrong prefix has been selected for lexical negation; that is, *unpatient* should be changed into *impatient*.
- d. The sentence contains a double negative, which is ungrammatical in Standard English. In Standard English, *some* → *any*, changing *something* to *anything* (rather than to *nothing*).
- e. *Not any* cannot occur at the beginning of a sentence to negate a noun phrase, since *not*-negation is used to negate verbs. *No* is needed here to negate a noun.
5. The difference is extremely subtle in this case. In the first sentence, *not* negates *might have tried before*, whereas in the second sentence *not* is narrower in scope, negating only *tried before*. Thus, the first sentence negates the possibility that they tried, whereas the second sentence expresses the possibility that they didn't try.
6. *Some* changes to *any* in the environment of a negative like *not* only if the *some* refers to an indefinite nonspecific entity. When the entity that *some* refers to is an indefinite quantity but a specific entity (i.e., identifiable), then *some* → *any* does not take place. Thus, *I can't recall any of their names* means the teacher has forgotten all of them, but *I can't recall some of their names* means the teacher has forgotten only some of the names.
7. Perhaps making your students aware of the frequency with which native English speakers use contractions would encourage them to use them in informal speech and writing. In an ESL context, students might be given an assignment to canvas native speakers with a list of questions that would be likely to elicit negative responses. They could be instructed to listen not only to the content of the answers but also to the frequency of contracted forms versus uncontracted forms. For demonstration of the use of contracted forms in written informal language, the teacher could bring in a blog entry and have the students look for the contracted forms. Students could also be assigned to look for the contractions in a page of comic strips or to listen to an informal recorded conversation between two native speakers.
8. An inherently negative verb such as *fail*, which occurs with an infinitive phrase, can be paraphrased with sentential *not* when the infinitive is rephrased as a complete sentence. For example:

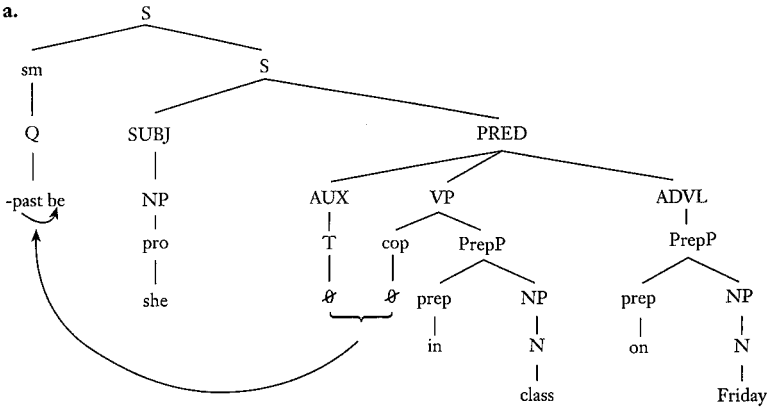
He failed to do it.

He didn't do it.

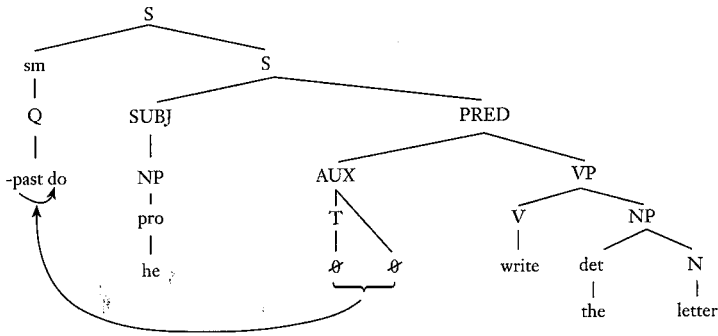
Chapter 11: Yes/No Questions

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a. unmarked <i>yes/no</i> question b. negative <i>yes/no</i> question c. <i>some</i> in a <i>yes/no</i> question d. uncontracted negative <i>yes/no</i> question e. <i>yes/no</i> question with <i>do</i> f. statement-form question g. focused <i>yes/no</i> question h. standard short-form answer i. formulaic short answer j. <i>yes/no</i> question with phrasal modal and <i>do</i> k. echo question (showing surprise) l. elliptical <i>yes/no</i> question | <p>Did you like the recital? Weren't you going to say something to me? Would you like some biscuits? Does it not make reference to the law of gravity? Do you like to go swimming? You hit the bicycle? Did YOU turn on the computer? [Is she from China?] No, she isn't. [Will he take the risk?] I doubt it. / I'm afraid so. Do you have to pay for the brochure? [Nancy is leaving L.A. tonight.] She's leaving L.A. tonight? (Are) You going out for lunch?</p> |
|--|---|

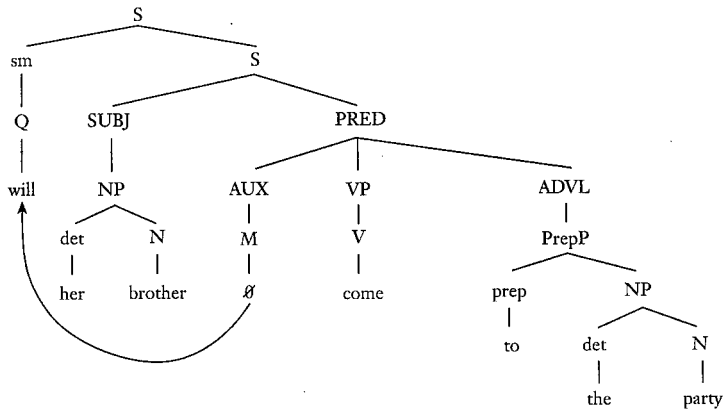
2. a.



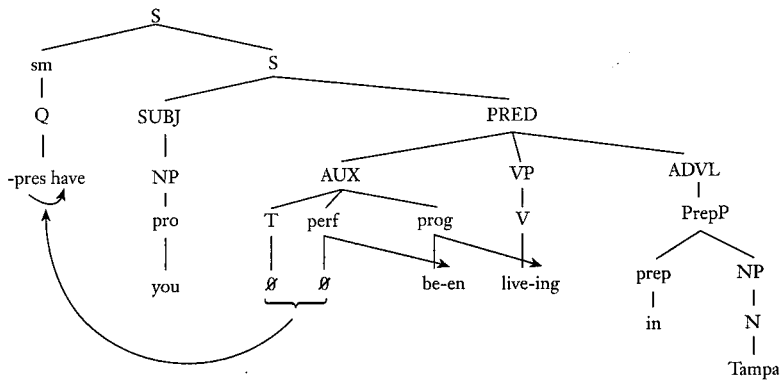
2. b.



2. c.



2. d.



3. a. The past tense in the auxiliary was not inverted with the subject and was therefore mistakenly attached to the main verb. The operator *do* has to carry the past tense (i.e., “Did she go?”).
 - b. The subject-operator inversion rule was violated. Only the first auxiliary verb and tense (if present) should be inverted with the subject (i.e., “Could he have gone?”).
 - c. The *do* support rule must be applied when a sentence has no auxiliary verb and no *be* copula. Also, the tense should be separated from the main verb and attached to the operator *do* (i.e., “Does he run fast?”).
 - d. *Do* support should not be applied when a sentence has a *be* copula, which serves as the operator in the subject-operator inversion rule (i.e., “Are they happy?”).
4. The first auxiliary verb or copula *be* verb—and the tense constituent if there is one—is involved in both of them. These elements are either followed by *not* in the case of the *not* placement rule or inverted with the subject in the case of the subject-operator inversion rule. If there is neither an auxiliary verb nor a *be* copula in the sentence, both require *do* support.
5. a. The main verb (other than a *be* copula) is not inverted with the subject in English question formation. *Do* support gets applied in this case (i.e., “Did you see . . . ?”).
 - b. Tense should be marked only once. In sentences with a *do* operator, the *do* acts as the tense carrier, while the main verb takes the base form without tense.
 - c. If *not* comes before the subject in the sentence, it should be contracted with the verb (i.e., “Isn’t she intelligent?”); if *not* comes after the subject, it is uncontracted (i.e., “Is she not intelligent?”).
 - d. If there is no auxiliary verb or copula *be* in the sentence, then the *do* operator is used in short answers to *yes/no* questions:

Do you like ice cream? Yes, I do.

Alternatively, since *like* is a transitive verb, if a full-form answer were given, *like* must be followed by an NP:

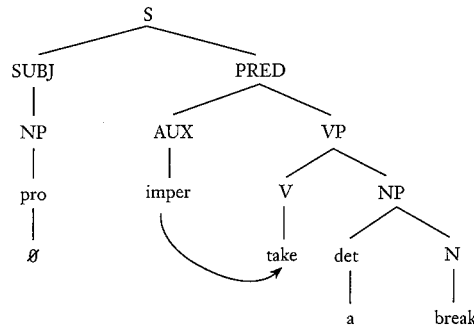
| | | |
|------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Do you like ice cream? | { | Yes, I like it. |
| | | Yes, I like ice cream. |
6. First of all, you want your students to be able to answer questions truthfully using affirmative and negative answers. Then, since subject-operator inversion in negative *yes/no* questions is done differently depending on whether the *not* has been contracted, it makes sense to introduce negation first and cover the syntactic variation with the full form/contractions there because this simplifies the explanation of subject-auxiliary inversion: when *not* is contracted with the operator, it inverts with the subject. When *not* retains its full form, it remains after the subject and does not invert.

Getting learners to ask questions requires special activities such as pairing students to eliciting information from each other (major, hobby, favorite color/food, etc). Another activity is a game in which students have to ask questions to guess someone else’s favorite actor/singer, etc. Can you think of other ways to get students to ask questions?
7. He is correct because native speakers do produce uninverted *yes/no* questions. You should point out, however, that native speakers do so only when they have certain expectations about the answer they will receive. Since inverting *yes/no* questions is the norm, this student’s uninverted questions will often seem inappropriate (i.e., aggressive, presumptuous, and rude) to his listeners.
8. This humor in this exchange arises because the function and the form of utterances do not always go together. Here, B has treated A’s indirect request for the time as if it were a literal request for information as the form suggests (i.e., whether B has a watch).

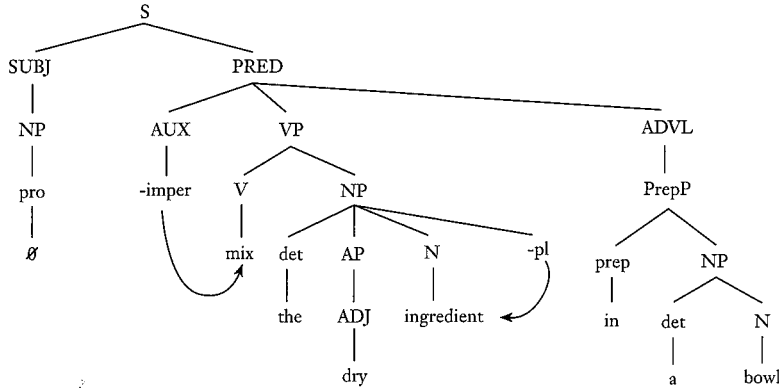
Chapter 12: Imperatives

1. a. imperative
 - (i.) affirmative Get something to drink.
 - (ii.) negative Don’t touch the light bulb.
- b. inclusive *let-* imperative Let’s go roller-blading this afternoon.
- c. diffuse imperative Somebody help me!
- d. *let* imperative as an expository device Let us now consider the issue of how to revise the budget.
- e. elliptical imperative (Get me) Three coffees.
- f. *you* retention Mike, you read the first half.
- g. imperative with *please* Please pass the salt.
- h. emphatic *do* to add politeness Do join our group tomorrow.

2. a.



2. b.



3. a. Pronouns other than the second person pronoun, *you*, cannot be the subjects of imperatives.
 - b. A negative imperative requires the verb *do* along with a negative particle before a main verb. In this sentence a main verb such as *be* or *get* is missing.
 - c. Imperatives are tenseless—which means they never take an inflection.
 - d. If *not* is uncontracted in a negative imperative, *you* must be omitted.
4. Evidence for the fact that imperatives are tenseless is that there is never any inflection even for the third person diffuse imperative:

Somebody help (*helps) me.

One piece of syntactic evidence for the argument that a subject of an unmarked imperative is *you* is that the form of the reflexive pronoun in object position in imperatives is always *yourself* or *yourselves*:

Wash yourself/yourselves.

Wash *myself/*himself/*herself/*itself/*ourselves/*themselves.

5. These other subjectless utterances occur only in highly informal contexts, whereas subjectless imperatives are much more frequent and conventionalized than are imperatives with subjects. Additionally, the other elliptical utterances often need more context to be properly interpreted: enough clues must be provided to easily identify the deleted subject (different contexts can force an interpretation different from the ones provided in the parentheses). On the other hand, deleted subjects of imperatives are easily identifiable since they always refer to the addressee.
6. Show students various contexts where imperatives are appropriate. These would include situations where imperatives are polite, such as offers and invitations, especially with *please* and emphatic *do*; and situations where cooperation is assumed, such as requests for items at the table (*Please pass the butter.*); and warnings (*Watch out!*). In addition, it can be a good idea to illustrate some situations in which they may want to be forceful to counteract rudeness or attempts to take advantage of them.
7. Adding *please* to an imperative or using the emphatic *do* are the ways already mentioned. In addition, embedding an imperative within a conditional can make it sound more polite—for example, “If you have the time, bring me the files.” Adding tags may also increase politeness: “Bring me the files, would you?” Another way is to use tags that imply that the recipient is already aware of the need for the action expressed in the imperative, such as “Watch that bar line, OK?” or “Snatch a breath there, right?” Using a personal form of address may increase politeness (i.e., *Answer the phone, Mary.*). Intonation is crucial in determining exactly how polite these imperatives sound.

Chapter 13: Wh-Questions

1. a. *wh*-question focusing on the subject
 b. *wh*-question focusing on an object of a preposition
- c. *wh*-question focusing on a determiner:
 - (i.) possessive
 - (ii.) demonstrative
 - (iii.) quantifier
- d. uninverted *wh*-question
- e. negative *wh*-question
 - (i.) contracted
 - (ii.) uncontracted
- f. formulaic *wh*-question (lexicalized unit)
- g. *wh*-question with ellipsis of the auxiliary

Who wrote this poem?

formal—To whom did you send this report?

informal—Who did you send this report to?

Whose pen is this?

Which color do you like better?

How many articles did you find on that topic?

You went there with whom?

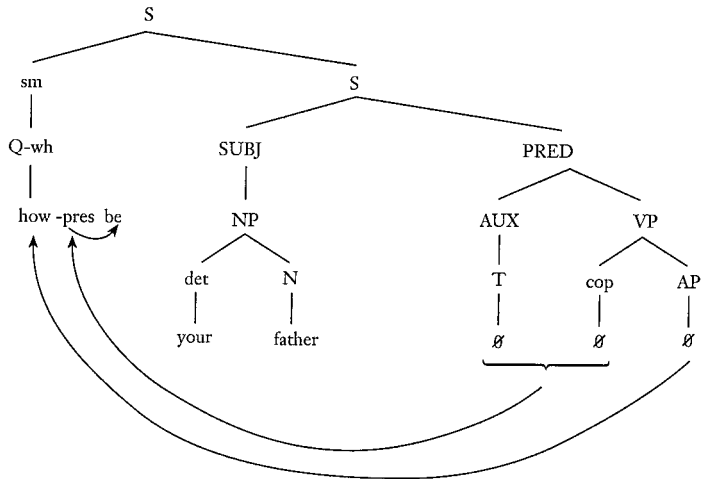
Why didn't he answer you?

Why did he not answer you?

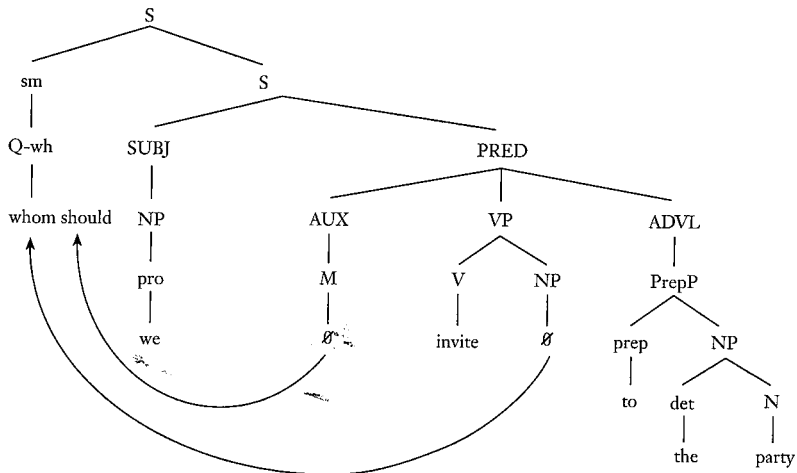
How are you doing? / How's it going?

Who ___ you going with? (are)

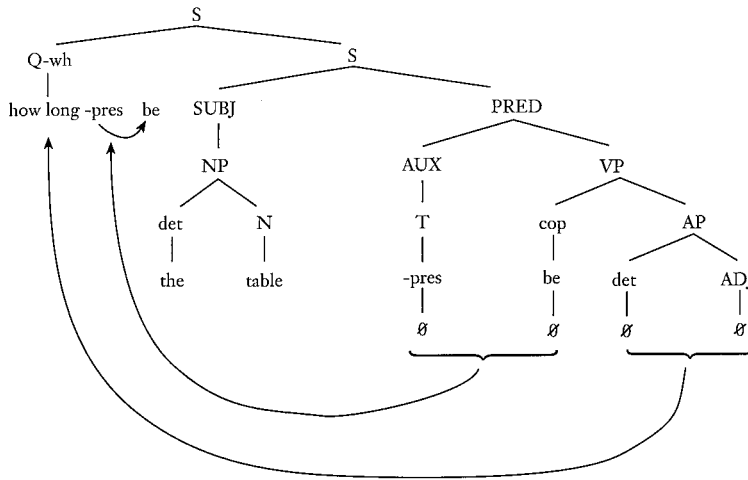
2. a.



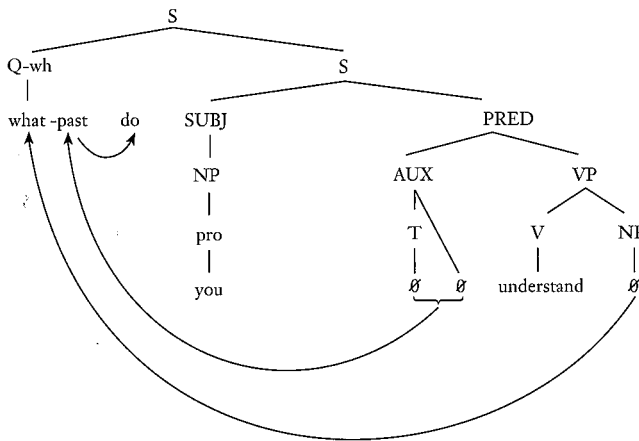
2. b.



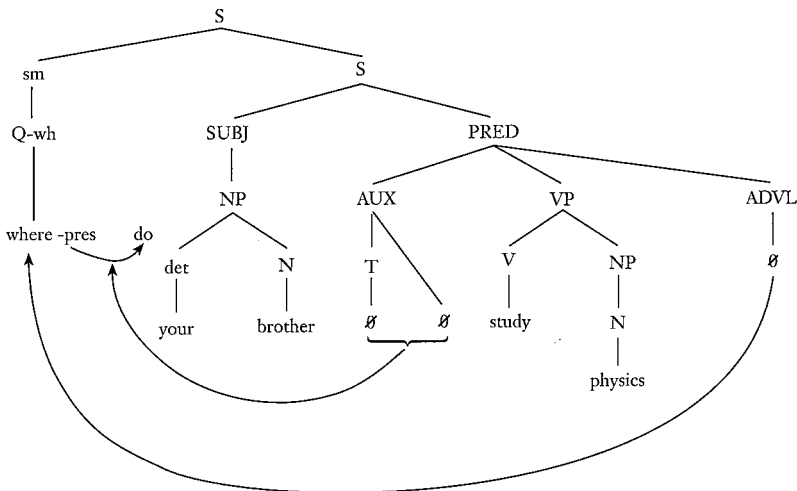
2. c.



2. d.



2. e.



3. When a determiner is the focus of a *wh*-question, the head noun constituent it modifies must be moved, along with the determiner (e.g., *which car*; *whose handbag*).

4. More specific *wh*-questions can be:

- What street do you live on?
- Which shelf is the sugar on?
- How far back is it?

5. a. Subject-operator inversion should be applied when the *wb*-question focuses on something in the predicate (i.e., *Where are you going?*).
 - b. This question lacks *do* support, which is necessary if a question has no auxiliary verb or copula and it focuses on something in the predicate. (This could, of course, also be an elliptical question if used appropriately as such and generally pronounced *Whatcha want?*)
 - c. The preposition *to* should either be fronted with the *wb*-question word (i.e., *To whom did he say that?*) or it should remain behind when the *wb*-question is fronted (i.e., *Who did he say that to?*). It should not occur in both places.
 - d. English sentences require a verb. In this sentence, the copula *be* (correct form: *is*) has been omitted.
6. Structure: With *why*, the normal rules for *wb*-question formation apply. They also apply for the *what . . . for* structure, except that *for* cannot be fronted with the *what*; it must stay behind. For example,

*For what did he say that? (What did he say that for?)

With *how come*, the word order of the following elements is the same as for an affirmative statement—that is, there is no subject-operator inversion.

Meaning: All three can be used to ask for a reason; however, unless questions with *why* are given a particular intonation pattern, they appear to be more neutral than do *what . . . for* and *how come*. One can imagine the latter two being used as challenges; for example,

What did you do that for? (surely there was a better alternative!)

Another difference may be that *why* and *how come* can be used to ask about the cause of something, whereas *what . . . for* seems to ask about reason or purpose; for example,

Why is the sky blue? (cause)

How come the sky is blue? (cause)

What is the sky blue for? (reason/purpose)

Register: *Why* questions appear to be the most formal, with *how come* and *what . . . for* being used informally. *How come* is probably the least formal of the three. In addition to these differences, another instance where they cannot be paraphrases of each other is in the formation of negative questions. *What . . . for* cannot be used as a negative paraphrase of the other two:

Why didn't he say that?

How come he didn't say that?

*What didn't he say that for?

7. In the questions with *did* [i.e., (a), (b), and (e)] the question focuses on information contained in the predicate. In these questions, the subject and operator must be inverted, and the *do* operator has been added to carry the tense. In the questions without *did* [i.e., (c) and (d)], the question focuses on information contained in the subject. In such cases, no inversion and, therefore, no *do* operator are required.
8. The second *do* is lexical and, therefore, meaningful. The first *do* is added only to allow subject-operator inversion in the question form; it does not carry any meaning.

Chapter 14: Tag, Alternative, Exclamatory, and Rhetorical Questions

1. a. tag question
 - (i.) unmarked, confirming You're going to give me back that money I lent you, aren't you?
 - (ii.) idiosyncratic I'm subtle, aren't I?
 - (iii.) marked So you're going to pay me back next week, are you?
 - b. alternative question Do you want to go to a movie tonight or the concert?
 - c. alternative *wb*-question combination What do you want to do tonight—a movie or the concert?
 - d. exclamatory "question" Aren't you lucky!
 - e. rhetorical question Are you here to worry about grades or to learn something?
2. a. The tense should be the same in both the main verb and the tag. The main verb and the tag should be either both present (*wants* and *doesn't*) or both past (*wanted* and *didn't*).
 - b. Since the main clause is negative (negated by the preverbal adverb *never*), the tag needs to be affirmative (i.e., *does she*).
 - c. Just as with negative *yes/no* questions and negative *wb*-questions, the *not* in a negative tag question must be contracted if it is to precede the subject in the tag (i.e., *didn't he*). Otherwise, *not* should follow the subject (i.e., *did he not*).
 - d. The exclamatory question follows the same grammatical rules as other negative questions (as in (c) above); when the *not* is placed before the subject (i.e., *that*), it must be contracted (i.e., *isn't that wonderful!*).
3. a. Is Janet blue-eyed or is she not blue-eyed?
 - b. You're looking forward to vacation, aren't you?
 - c. Was it Bill who wrote this letter, or was it Bob who wrote this letter?

4. a. If there is an auxiliary verb in the main sentence, the tag question is formed using the same auxiliary verb. The subject in the main sentence and the tag must refer to the same entity as well, although the latter is pronominalized if necessary. Thus, the tag must be *aren't we* rather than *isn't it*.
 - b. *Yes* is not an appropriate tag question in English, although native speakers will sometimes use *no* as a tag with a rising intonation in informal situations.
 - c. This has the intonation pattern of an alternative question; the listener is being asked to make a choice between two alternatives. Since it is not a *yes/no* question, the response *yes* is inappropriate, as would be *no*.
5. a. These two utterances differ with regard to the presupposition of the speaker. Sentence (2) would be uttered by the speaker if he or she did not expect it to rain, whereas (1) signals that rain is expected by the speaker.
 - b. Analysis of the wider discourse context, including intonation, would be needed to be certain of the difference. It may be that (2) is more formal than (1) or more emphatic; for example, one can imagine (2) being uttered by a speaker who is losing patience with his or her listener.
 - c. The speaker of (1) expects that the listener has carried out the action. In (2) (depending on stress and intonation), the speaker may be expressing displeasure or annoyance that the action was performed; or the speaker may be trying to ascertain whether or not the action was performed. The second interpretation for (2) is more characteristic of British than American usage.
 - d. In (1), the speaker is raising a genuine question about the truth of the proposition and either has no presuppositions about the listener's thoughts or suspects the listener may disagree. In (2), the speaker is seeking confirmation and expects the listener to agree with the proposition.
 - e. The speaker in (1) expects disagreement with the proposition or has doubt about the listener's position (the listener may have given some indication—verbal or otherwise—of disagreement), whereas the speaker in (2) is expressing an exclamation, not asking a question.
 - f. (1) is able to be used to express doubt or certainty, as in (d), depending on the intonation used. (2) can be used only in seeking confirmation from the listener (i.e., expecting agreement). Also, (2) puts greater pressure on the interlocutor to respond than does (1).
6. Ad writers sometimes use such rhetorical questions to engage readers, who [hopefully] will answer silently, "Of course not!" to the first question and "Of course!" to the second. Once readers have mentally responded to such a rhetorical question, it is more likely that they will read on in the advertisement and become interested in whatever is being advertised.
7. Both are fairly informal requests. The first is more polite because it is the usual (i.e., unmarked) use of the tag question (i.e., the tag is negative when the main clause is affirmative). The second is less common (marked) and more direct; it can imply some impatience, which might also signal rudeness or irritation. We have been told that the second option is more common in British than American English and been reminded that intonation plays a crucial role in the interpretation of such tag requests.

Chapter 15: Articles

1. a. common count noun This is a book.
 - b. common noncount noun I like rice.
 - c. proper noun Our neighbor is Mr. Jensen.
 - d. definite article (situational use) There's a book on the table. (table is visible to interlocutors)
 - e. definite article (textual use) A large gray cat walked ahead of us. We followed the cat for a block.
 - f. definite article (cultural use) Look at the moon!
 - g. definite article (structural use) The first of the applicants got the job.
 - h. indefinite article (classification) We need a new car.
 - i. Ø article (generic) Dreams are free.
 - j. shifting countability I said I wanted some coffee, so he brought me a coffee.
2. a. *Milk* is a noncount noun here and takes either zero article or *some*. *A milk* means a serving/cup of milk. If the milk were spilled, it would no longer be contained within a cup and therefore could not take the indefinite article, *a*.
 - b. *Information* is a noncount noun in English. As such, it cannot take a plural ending or the determiner *many*. In this context it would take either zero article or *some*.
 - c. *Examination* is a singular count noun and must therefore take an article. The indefinite article *an* is required if the speaker is referring to a specific exam that the listener knows nothing about.
 - d. *Computer* is a singular count noun, so it cannot occur without an article. A generic statement is intended here, so the student should be advised to use the zero article with a plural noun, *computers* (this being the most flexible pattern for generic use) and to make the necessary number adjustments to other words (i.e., *aren't* and *luxuries*).
 - e. *Europe*, the name of a continent, is a proper noun and does not take an article.
 - f. Here *poetry* is a noncount noun used non-specifically. No article should be used.
 - g. Singular predicate nominals that classify the subject noun are preceded by an indefinite article (*a/an*).

3. An indefinite article in object position may be ambiguous with regard to whether it modifies a specific or nonspecific noun in the speaker's mind. *A car* could be nonspecific for both speaker and listener--that is, any car; or it could be specific for the speaker--that is, a particular car that John has in mind.
4.
 - a. structural use (the relative clause provides information that allows the listener to identify the film)
 - b. situational use (*the check* is visible to the speaker and listener)
 - c. textual use (*the course* in sentence 2 refers back to "a grammar course" in sentence 1)
 - d. structural use (*last* suggests one unique position within an ordering or ranking)
 - e. situational use (although the listener may not have known that there were *rude fans* in the stadium, use of the definite article alerts him or her to this possibility)
 - f. textual use, or associative anaphoric use (*the traffic* refers to a unique entity associated with a previously mentioned referent *New York*)
 - g. cultural use (the speaker and listener are presumably in a state where there is one governor and both share knowledge of this fact)
5. In the first sentence, the conceptualization of *coffee* is probably of a generic mass-like substance. In the second sentence, *a coffee* is conceptualized as a cup of coffee. In the third sentence the speaker most likely conceptualizes *coffee* as a substance that the listener is able to distinguish from other beverages or foods served at the cafe where the conversation is taking place. In the last sentence, the speaker conceptualizes different types of coffee.
6.
 - a. The speaker should use *the blue pen* because the referent is singular and definite, i.e., it can be identified by the listener in the immediately perceptible situation.
 - b. The speaker should say *homework* with the zero article, since it is a noncount noun in English and thus cannot appear with the indefinite article *a*.
 - c. The speaker should say *a good joke* because the listener is unable to identify the referent as unique against any of the various backgrounds discussed in the use section of this chapter. While the joke is specific for the speaker, it is not so for the listener.
 - d. The speaker should say *water* with zero article, since this is a generic statement. The pattern [*the* + mass noun] is not acceptable for generic reference in English.
 - e. The speaker should say *the Mediterranean Sea* because this is a cultural use of the definite article, where the names of seas take *the*. The Mediterranean Sea can be conceptualized as unique among a background of other seas.
7. Do on your own. Answers will vary.
8. Do on your own. Answers will vary.
9. Do on your own. Answers will vary.

Chapter 16: Reference and Possession

1.
 - a. subject pronoun She loves the man.
 - b. object pronoun The man loves her.
 - c. possessive pronoun I thought the car outside the apartment was theirs.
 - d. possessive determiner Their apartment was small and cluttered.
 - e. demonstrative pronoun The last exercises were harder than these.
 - f. demonstrative determiner These exercises are easy.
 - g. reciprocal pronoun We bought each other presents.
 - h. reflexive pronoun I bought myself a new dress.
 - i. indefinite compound pronoun No one likes a poor loser.
 - j. singular "they" Anyone using the beach after 5 P.M. should know that they do so at their own risk.
 - k. 3' possessive Erin's voice was the loudest in the room.
 - l. of possessive The title of the story was "The Lottery."
2.
 - a. Although the head noun is human (*stranger*), the adjective modifiers make the noun phrase long, thus indicating that the *of* possessive is preferred here (i.e., *He checked the ticket of the mysterious and handsome foreign traveler*).
 - b. *Him* is an object pronoun being used where the subject pronoun *he* should be used.
 - c. *Mines* is the incorrect form of this possessive pronoun. It should be *mine*. This is perhaps an overgeneralization error since the other possessive pronouns end in *s*.
 - d. The last pronoun in the sentence should be the object pronoun *me* since it is the object of the preposition *besides*.
3. Other pronouns in English that can also mean "everyone in general" are:
 - you*- You gotta study hard to get good grades nowadays.
 - we*- We have to study hard if we want to get good grades.
 - everyone* (*everybody*)- Everyone should learn a foreign language.
4. Two ways of avoiding the usage of *be*, *his*, and *him* when these forms are used in a general sense are:
 - a. to use plurals
 - A student should plan his schedule wisely. → Students should plan their schedules wisely.

4. a. *Problem* is a count noun and must have the *-s* ending for plural. *Much* is used before noncount nouns, not plural count nouns. *Many* is the correct form; that is, the correct NP is *many problems*. (*Much difficulty*—a noncount NP—would also be correct.)
 - b. *A dozen* is a special numerical expression (=12), rather than a quantity such as *pound*. It therefore does not take *of*.
 - c. *Information* is a noncount noun and cannot take *-s*. *Some* is still correct because it can be used with either count or noncount nouns.
 - d. *A lot of* is preferred over *much* in positive assertions, especially in informal language and short utterances.
 - e. When followed by another determiner such as *my*, which makes the head noun specific, *some* takes *of*.
 - f. Noun-based numerical words remain in the singular even when modified by a number greater than one. The correct phrase would be “Five Hundred Miles.”
 - g. The student would appear to be relying on aural evidence, since the phrase *a couple of minutes* is often pronounced as written in the example. The student needs to learn the nonspecific quantifier *a couple of* as a chunk, although in North American English it is increasingly common to hear people say (and even see them write) *a couple minutes*. In addition, the difference between *a dozen* and *a couple of* may be noted—*a dozen* is a precise numerical expression (=12), whereas *a couple of* is more imprecise, which explains the use of *of* with *couple*.
 - h. When *some* is used with *of*, the definite article is needed before the noun phrase to make it specific, which would seem to be required in this case (i.e., *some of the books*).
5. It is grammatical to use the plural when the number-based noun is used with a general rather than specific number reference. In this case, the number of centuries is not specified. However, it would be ungrammatical to say

*a Five-centuries-old Framework

because the number is specified. The same pattern occurs with phrases like *four million dollars* (specific) but *millions of stars* (general).

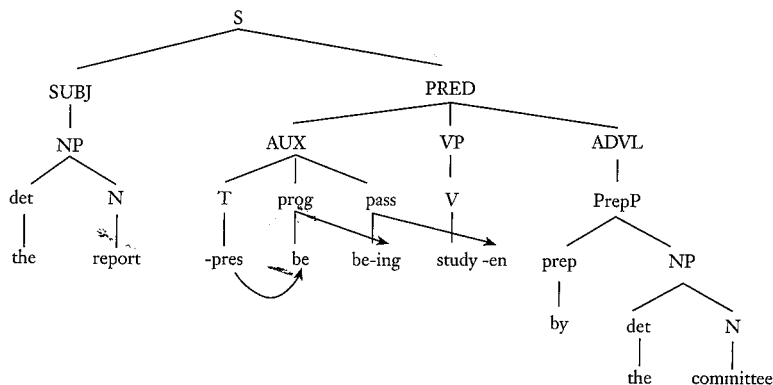
6. Quantifiers are used with *of* only when the noun being quantified is definite. In this case, *several offspring* is the first mention of the offspring, and *offspring* is specific but not definite. In the second mention, the offspring are now both specific and definite, and stating *several of the offspring* denotes that only a subset of the group is now being referred to.
7. When the definite determiner is before the partitive noun, it specifies the exact identity of the item(s) referred to. When the definite determiner is before the following noun, it specifies the set of such things. For example, *this carton of milk* refers to only one possible carton (e.g., the one in my hand), whereas *a carton of this milk* could refer to any carton of the specified type of milk (e.g., any one from a shelf of nonfat milk cartons).

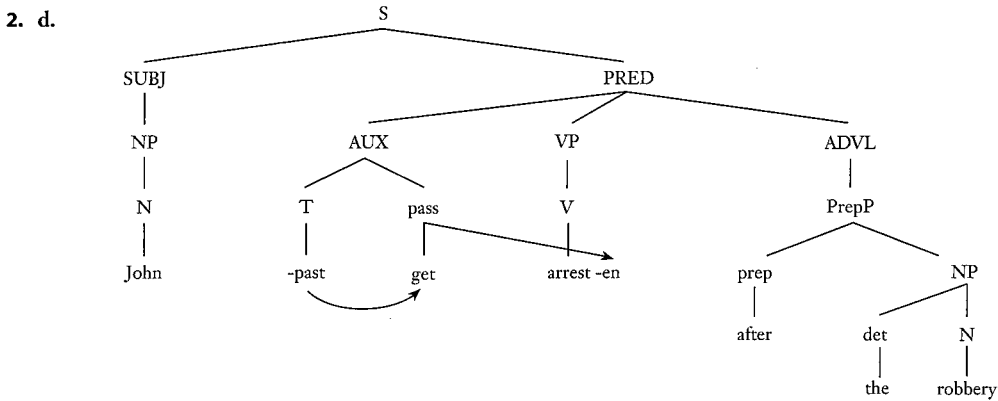
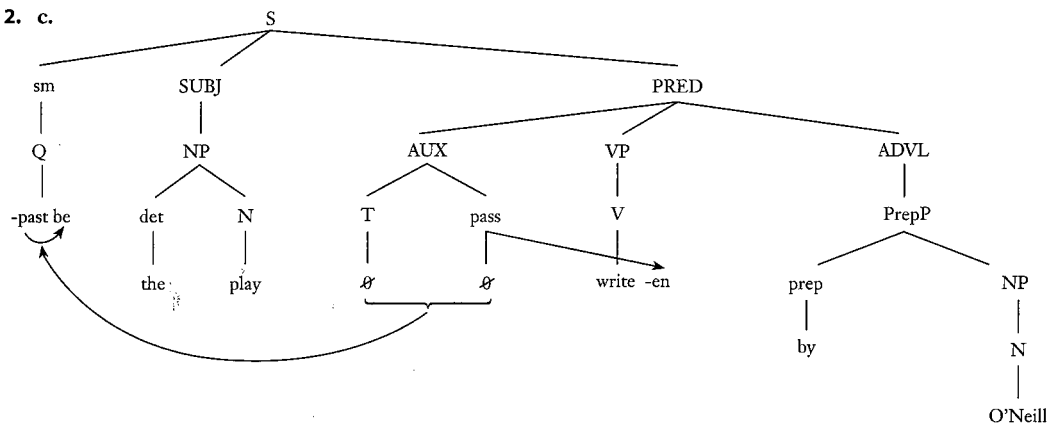
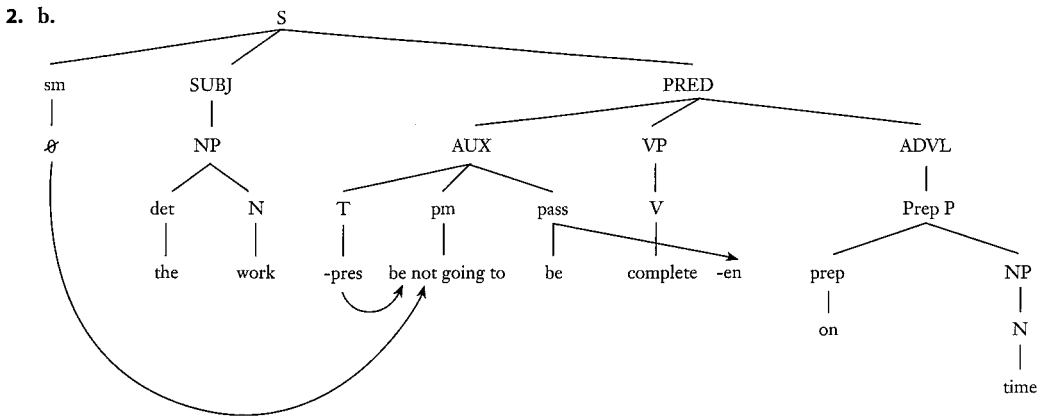
Chapter 18: The Passive Voice

1. a. active voice
- b. passive voice
- c. passive voice with agent
- d. the *get*-passive
- e. a verb that is always passive
- f. a verb that is never passive
- g. middle voice (with ergative verb)
- h. an intransitive verb with a nonagent subject

Two million people watch the program every week.
 The mail is delivered daily.
 “The Road Not Taken” was written by Robert Frost.
 The dog got hit on the way home.
 Jonathan was born in Japan.
 Water consists of hydrogen and oxygen.
 Temperatures are increasing everywhere.
 The keys to the car disappeared!

2. a.





3. a. The student has confused the order of the auxiliary elements, and inflected *have* for a past form incorrectly. The *be ... en* of the passive follows all the other elements of the auxiliary and, unless it is the first element in the auxiliary, *have* is always the correct form within such an auxiliary; for example, "Horace will have been tested on his Spanish." Alternatively, the intended sentence may have been "Horace will be tested on his Spanish." In this case, the *had* is unnecessary and should be deleted.
- b. *Contain* is one of those verbs like *weigh* and *have* that normally do not occur in a passive form. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973, pp. 359–360) indicate that there are four such categories of verbs:
- "Reciprocal" verbs (e.g., *resemble*, *look like*, *equal*, *agree with*)
*Her sister is resembled by Nancy.
 - Verbs of "containing" (e.g., *contain*, *hold*, *comprise*, *lack*)
*Confidence is lacked by him.

(iii.) Verbs of “suiting” (e.g., *suit, fit, become*)

*I am suited by this arrangement.

(iv.) Verbs of measurement (e.g., *weigh, cost, contain*)

*\$15 is cost by the shirt.

Many of these categories overlap with the stative verbs discussed in Chapter 7. Thus, many verbs that do not take progressive aspect also do not occur in the passive.

- c. Unlike as in some languages (such as some Bantu languages) a locative expression, such as *in the bus*, cannot be the subject of a passive clause in English. The object of the action must precede the verb in subject position; that is, in this case *a sandwich* must precede the verb *was eaten*.
 - d. The use of the definite article before *customer* makes this NP the known information in the sentence, whereas *some cars* (lacking such a marker) is the new information. The active word order would thus reverse the order of these NPs, putting them in the more acceptable order where the new information comes second (*The customer bought some cars.*).
4. The second *be* in a sentence with two *be* verb forms in a row is the passive. The passive *be* takes the *-en* ending (here on *prepare*), i.e., (perf + prog + pass) is the sequence in the AUX.
 5. “A deck of cards that has been shuffled,” “both cards are turned face down again,” and “until all the pairs have been matched” all use the passive and all maintain the focus on the patient (the cards) rather than on the agents (the students playing the cards).
 6.
 - a. *To be born* always occurs in the passive. The student has omitted the obligatory *be* auxiliary.
 - b. The student has used *sang*, the simple past tense of the verb *sing*, instead of the correct (irregular) form of the passive participle—that is, *sung*.
 - c. *Argentina* is the agent, and active word order is used, so the passive voice is incorrect. An active verb form should be used, such as *Argentina has slowed down its inflation*. Another solution is to use a change-of-state verb and focus more on the happening than on the agent: *Inflation has slowed in Argentina*.
 - d. The incorrect participle has been used (it should be simply *hurt*). This is an instance of main verb *get* being followed by an adjective in its past participle form, which is irregular for *hurt*. This is not passive voice.
 - e. *Die* is always intransitive and therefore can never occur in the passive. The transitive verb *kill* is probably intended here, since an agent is expressed.
 - f. *Disappear* is an intransitive verb, and thus the receiver of the action is the subject without the use of the passive. Given the absence of an expressed agent or patient, deleting *was* is the best way to correct the sentence rather than changing the verb (to *lose*, for example).
 7. *Rise, lie, and sit* are all intransitive verbs and therefore can never occur in the passive. They each have transitive counterparts given here (which can occur in the passive), however, the two forms are very similar and thus are easily confused.
 8. Although the differences are not glaring, English speakers tend to use the *be* -passive when the agent is at least understood:

Sheila and Steven were married on August 28 (by the rabbi).

The *get*-passive tends to be used informally when there is no expressed or understood agent:

Sheila and Steven got married on August 28.

In addition, the *be*-passive is used whenever the speaker or writer wants to express a stative passive:

Sheila and Steven are married. (i.e., they are not single)

The *get*-passive can never be used in this meaning.

The active form, *have married*, is punctual and can be used to express repetitive action, as in

Sheila and Steven have married each other seven times.

or to express the action of the officiator:

The rabbi has married many couples this year.

Have been married (like *are married*) is a *be* + adjective construction (present perfect):

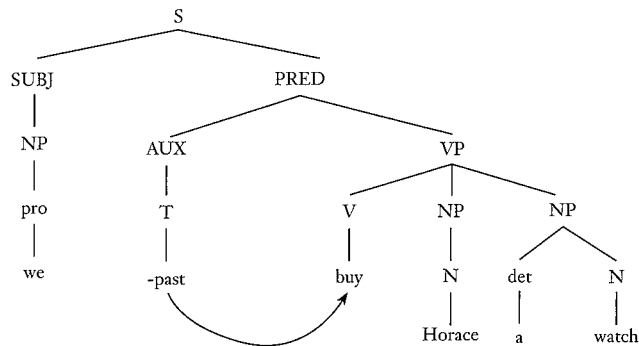
Sheila and Steven have been married for seven years.

or

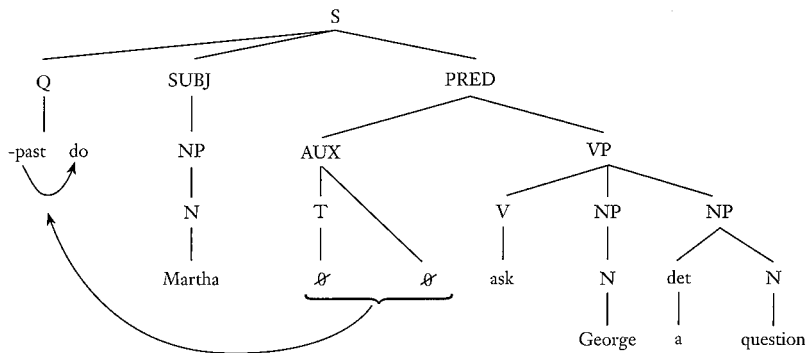
Sheila and Steven have both been married before.

9. A lengthy agentive *by* phrase will presumably mean that there is important information contained in it. When this is the case, the passive is a good choice because it means that the important information will come later in the sentence, in the comment (rheme) position.

2. d.



2. e.



3. a. The direct object is a pronoun, while the indirect object is a noun. Under these conditions, the rules of dominance tell us that indirect object alternation shouldn't take place (especially if the direct object is *it*). This sentence should be:
John hasn't sent it to his brother.
- b. When indirect object alternation takes place (i.e., the dative meaning is intended), the preposition is deleted:
Mary bought me the book.
Alternatively, if the proxy meaning is intended, the prepositional phrase would not move forward, since the direct object is not long and complex enough to merit movement of the PrepP:
Mary bought the book for me.
- c. With eliciting verbs, the preposition *of* precedes the indirect object, not the preposition *to*.
4. a. *active* Mother sent the parcel to Bob.
with indirect object alternation Mother sent Bob the parcel.
passive (direct object as subject) The parcel was sent to Bob by Mother.
with no agent expressed The parcel was sent to Bob.
passive (indirect object as subject) Bob was sent the parcel by Mother.
with no agent expressed Bob was sent the parcel.
- b. *active* Bill brought some flowers for Agnes.
with indirect object alternation Bill brought Agnes some flowers.
passive (direct object as subject) Some flowers were brought for Agnes by Bill.
with no agent expressed Some flowers were brought for Agnes.
(Note: Some dialects allow "Agnes was brought some flowers (by Bill)."
This is awkward for many speakers of American English.)
5. a. *Explain* is a verb that does not allow indirect object alternation (i.e., *explain that rule to me*).
- b. With indirect object alternation, the preposition is deleted (i.e., *give me an answer*).
- c. *Open* is a verb that allows indirect object alternation only when the deleted *for* is benefactive, not when it is the proxy *for*. Thus one can say:
Open him a can of beer. (benefactive: the can of beer is for him)
*Open him the door. (proxy: the door is not for him, but being opened on his behalf)
- d. Since *ask* is an eliciting verb, the underlying preposition in this sentence is *of*:
We asked something of Harry.
But even if the student had used *of*, he or she would have been incorrect here since no preposition can be used if the direct object is deleted (*We asked Harry*).

e. *Excuse* does not take an indirect object. Either *me* or *my poor English* may function as the direct object, but one cannot use both.

Please excuse me.

Please excuse my poor English.

6. With the exception of the verb *say*, Fraser is correct in stating that one-syllable verbs that take indirect objects may optionally undergo indirect object alternation. They can do this whether their indirect objects are marked by *to*, *for*, or *of*. Although Fraser did not explicitly mention this, it is also important to note that no verb of three or more syllables may take indirect object alternation:

*Educate us these children. *Evaluate NSF this proposal.

*Communicate your father this message.

The real problem arises with two-syllable verbs. Except for the two-syllable eliciting verbs, which never take indirect object alternation, it appears that neither the stress pattern nor the co-occurring preposition is a perfect predictor of indirect object alternation:

| | to "dative" | for "benefactive" | of "eliciting" |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---|--|
| stress on first syllable | *mention offer | open (not 'proxy') scramble (i.e., the eggs) | |
| stress on second syllable | *explain award | *perform reserve | the two-syllable eliciting verbs do not take indirect object movement: *demand; *request |

We hope that future research will reveal some system in what now appears to be rather arbitrary behavior.

7. In conversation, *giving* is usually reduced to *givin'*, making the present and passive participles hard to distinguish. You would therefore want to have your students concentrate on listening for the differences in the prepositional phrases. The *by* phrase always marks the agent, and the whole phrase is often deleted. On the other hand, the *to* phrase is obligatorily present with many directional or dative verbs.

8. *Beg* can take an indirect object only when it is an eliciting verb:

I beg this favor of you.

When it is used in this way, it cannot undergo indirect object alternation:

*I beg you this favor.

For other uses, *beg* does not take an indirect object. It does, however, take a direct object which could be an NP (e.g., I beg *your pardon*), containing within itself an indirect object. If the direct object is an infinitive phrase, it might also have an indirect object embedded within it:

I beg you to do something for me.

But here, the benefactive indirect object phrase (*for me*) belongs to the verb *do*, not *beg*.

A few eliciting verbs also occur in another frame with *for*. For example:

He begged/asked for money/help (of someone).

In this case, *for* is neither benefactive nor proxy, but a prepositional phrase, and the main verb is still eliciting.

Chapter 20: Adjectives

1.
 - a. attributive adjective What a beautiful day it is!
 - b. predicative adjective The sky is blue.
 - c. postnominal adjective Jack accepted the only job offered.
 - d. present participle adjective *Jurassic Park* is a thrilling movie.
 - e. past participle adjective We were thrilled to see you there.
 - f. gradable adjective She is a very skillful musician.
2.
 - a. *Asleep* functions exclusively as a predicate adjective and thus can never occur in attributive position as it does here.
 - b. *Main* is a "reference" adjective that can occur only in attributive position, not in predicate position as in this sentence.
 - c. The adjective phrase "overly fond of chocolate" is complex and is therefore restricted to postnominal or predicative position, not prenominal position as in this sentence, (i.e., *A person overly fond of chocolate...*).
 - d. When number specific measure phrases are used as modifiers, the singular form of the measurement noun is always used rather than the plural; thus *thirteen-year-old* is the correct form. The exception to this is when more general expressions are used, such as *centuries-old* as in Chapter 17, Exercise 5.
 - e. The adverb *completely* does not collocate well with the gradable, unbounded adjective *nice*, which works better with adverbs like *very* or *extremely*. *Completely* collocates better with ungradable, bounded adjective like *true* or *false*.
3. The *-ing* participle here can be interpreted either as a verb, in which case the sentence is elliptical for what Hazel is trying to do (e.g., *Hazel is trying to open the jar.*), or as an adjective, in which case *trying* describes Hazel (i.e., *Hazel tries one's patience.*).

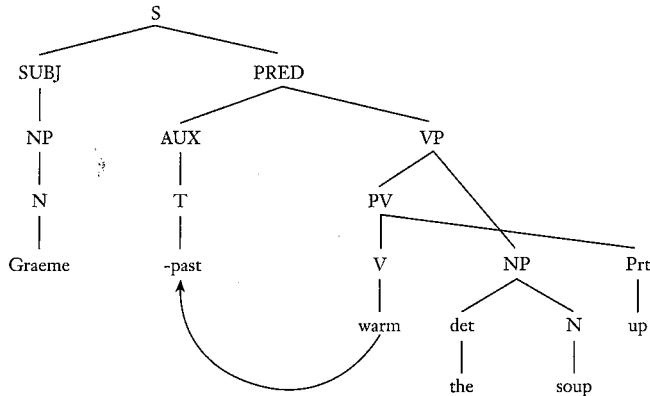
5. Do on your own. Answers will vary.
6. For *under*, the trajector is at a lower vertical point than is the landmark (e.g., *The troll lives under the bridge*). One nonspatial meaning extension for this preposition is connected to power or control (e.g., *The prince was under the witch's spell*).
7. The ambiguity lies in the two possible temporal interpretations of *in*. It could be used in the sense of "after five minutes has elapsed" (i.e., the storytelling will start after five minutes), or it could be used to mean that the telling of the story will be completed within a span of five minutes (i.e., the storytelling will start now and be finished after five minutes).
8. Do on your own. Answers will vary.

Chapter 22: Phrasal Verbs

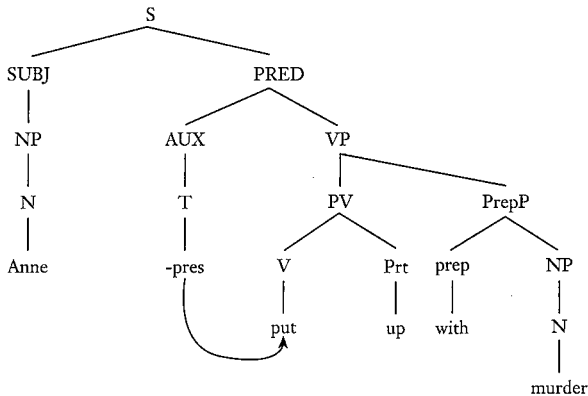
1.
 - a. verb + preposition
 - b. transitive phrasal verb
 - c. intransitive phrasal verb
 - d. separable phrasal verb
 - e. inseparable phrasal verb
 - f. phrasal verb plus preposition
 - g. literal phrasal verb
 - h. aspectual phrasal verb
 - i. idiomatic phrasal verb
 - j. phrasal verb that is always separated

Alice fell down the hole.
 Lois is always making up stories.
 Last night I just fooled around.
 We put our coats on.
 I'll go over those problems in class tomorrow.
 I am really put off by a pushy salesperson.
 Please pick up your clothes.
 I burned up lots of calories.
 I thing I'm going to freak out.
 The little girl cried her eyes out.

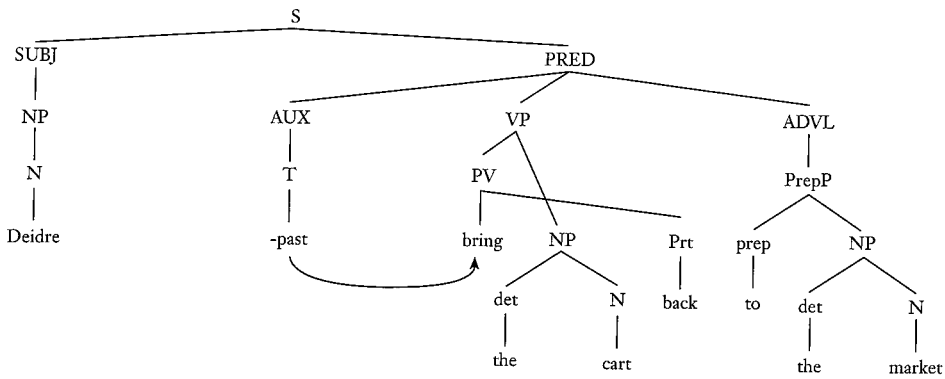
2. a.



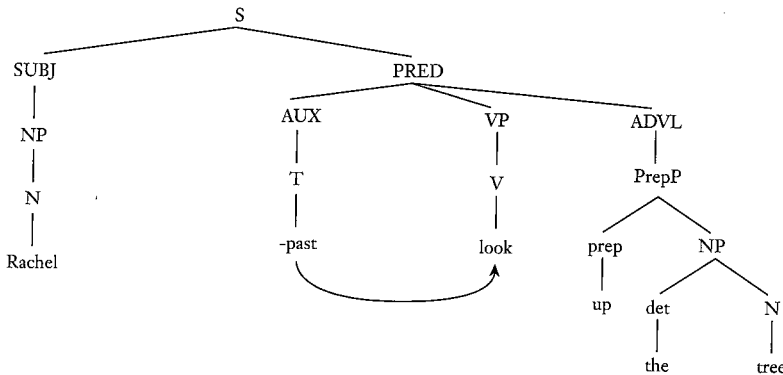
2. b.



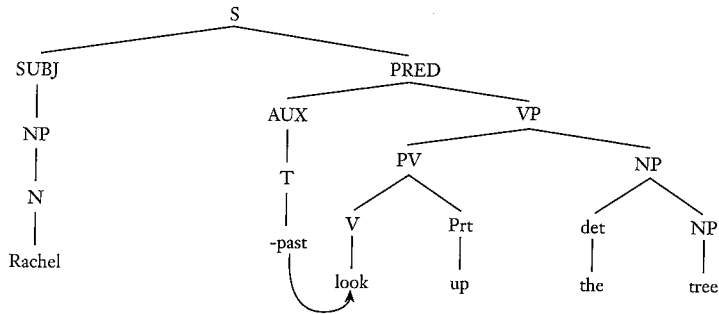
2. c.



2. d.



This sentence is ambiguous. A literal reading would be V + prep via the adverbial option.



A phrasal reading (i.e. she looked the tree up in a book) would be a phrasal verb (V + Prt), as above.

3. a. If *call on* means "to pay an informal visit," it is an inseparable phrasal verb and *on* should come after *called*. Alternatively, the wrong form of the particle may have been used. For example, if the meaning of "to telephone" was intended, *up* should have been used instead of *on*.
- b. Even though the particle *over* can be separated from its verb *look*, the direct object is very long and complex; in such a case, the particle should follow the verb directly.
- c. Indirect object alternation has already been applied to this sentence, implying that the indirect object (*Larry*) is nondominant. In such a case, the verb and its particle will not occur together because it would be in conflict with the fact that the indirect object is nondominant and is being moved forward in the sentence to indicate this. Thus, *I gave Larry back the money* would be correct, as would *I gave Larry the money back*, although the latter reduces the dominance of the direct object slightly since it is no longer sentence-final; it increases the dominance of the phrasal verb since the particle is in final position.
- d. *Show* is occasionally used in this sense (meaning "to appear"), but is potentially ambiguous with the transitive verb *show*, which has another meaning, "to make visible." Using the completive phrasal verb *show up* is more common in the sense of "to appear."
- e. *Put* would be a more likely verb for this sentence than *place*. (*She put back...*)
4. a. *Put up* is a phrasal verb that can occur with the preposition *with*, which in this case needs to be inserted after *up*, in order to express the meaning "cannot tolerate."

- b. *Discontinued* is a rather formal way of expressing the idea, which would be more typically expressed with a phrasal verb: *broke off*.
- c. The problem here is the particle. We *turn off* (or *put off, switch off, flick off*) lights, but a candle *burns out* or is *put out* or is *blown out*. A candle can also *burn down*, but it does not *burn off*.
- d. *Work out* is an intransitive phrasal verb. Thus the sentence could be *Kim worked out at the gym*, or, if the muscles were important to mention, the noun form should be used: *Kim gave her muscles a workout at the gym*.
- e. A pronoun always goes before the particle of a separable phrasal verb because of its nondominant status (it must refer to something previously mentioned in the discourse), i.e., *The child ate it up* (after being given a piece of cake).
5. The term “two-word verb” is somewhat inaccurate since some phrasal verbs have three components: a verb, particle, and preposition.
6. Tests for whether it is a verb + preposition:
- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| adverb insertion | *We came quickly across that issue yesterday. |
| phrase fronting | *Across that issue we came yesterday. |
| <i>wb</i> -fronting | *Across what did we come yesterday? |

Come across fails all these tests and thus is not a verb + preposition.

Tests for whether it is a phrasal verb:

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| passivization | *The issue was come across yesterday. |
| verb substitution | We encountered the issue yesterday. |
| NP insertion | *We came the issue across yesterday. |

Given that *come across* does not pass any of the tests for being a verb + preposition but passes one of those for a phrasal verb.

If we focus on the two tests recommended on pages 446–447, *come across* does not pass the first test (NP insertion), meaning that it may be either an inseparable phrasal verb or a verb + preposition (since this test does not distinguish between the two but only eliminates separable phrasal verbs). *Come across* also does not pass the second test (*wb*-fronting) and thus must be an inseparable phrasal verb.

Fight over passes the adverb insertion test,

My brother and I always fought furiously over the prize.

the phrase fronting test,

Over the prize we fought.

and the *wb*-fronting test

Over what did you fight?

so *fight over* is a verb + preposition.

7. In some poetic or archaic phraseology, it is possible to place certain prepositions after the NP object when the particle is adverbial in nature. In such unusual usage, it could be said that English has something resembling postpositions.
8. Library routine: I want to take a book out of the library. I finish off my coffee before going into the building. I look the book up on the computer catalog and jot down the call number. I look at the library map to find out where that call number is. I go up in the elevator and look for the book on the shelves. The stacks are dark, so I turn on the light. It's hard to pick out the book I want from all the others. After I find the book, I take it to the front desk and check it out. Before I go out, I decide to visit the newspaper section because I like to keep up with events around the world. On my way there, I notice there's going to be a seminar on using the Internet soon, so I sign up for it.
9. check in (to a hotel); grow up (in a place); stand by (your friend); shop around (for something)

Chapter 23: Nonreferential Subjects: Ambient *It* and Existential *There*

- ambient *it* How far is it to the beach?
 - referential *it* Have you seen my house key? I can't find it.
 - deictic *there* Let's go to the mountains. It's so peaceful there.
 - existential *there* There are several issues we need to discuss.
 - narrative use of *there* Yesterday, there was this really funny man here.
- Nonreferential *it* always uses a singular verb regardless of whether a singular or plural noun follows (in contrast to *there*).
 - Pronouns in a list following *there* are always object pronouns; thus *I* should be *me* (although native speakers who have been admonished to avoid using the object pronouns in such phrases in subject position may hypercorrect to produce a sentence like this).
 - There* should be *it*; ambient *it* is used when describing the weather with verbs or adjectives. (However, *There is some sunshine today* would be grammatical—though less common—since it uses a noun phrase.)
 - Only locative prepositional phrases can be moved to initial position without the use of *there*. Thus, *There are 28 days in the month of February* or *In the month of February there are 28 days* would be more accurate.

3. While the transformation works for the example given, it does not always work. For example, there is no corresponding sentence that could have undergone transformation for a sentence like:

There is no need for that.

*No need for that is.

Moreover, while such transformations would work for such a sentence if the verb was *exist* (*No need for that exists*), such an option does not exist for the use of *there* in lists or suggestions. For the following example:

Where's he going to sleep? Well, there's the couch.

The couch exists is not a suitable paraphrase. Besides the paraphrase problem, the sentences have different uses. This evidence all suggests that existential *there* should be placed directly in subject position.

4. a. This sentence lacks a surface subject, which every nonimperative, nonelliptical sentence in English requires. Ambient *it* is needed here as the subject.
- b. This word order is possible in certain contexts for more concrete descriptions, such as *A pen is on the table*. However, since *A lot of noise* is more abstract, existential *there* is required, in accordance with Bolinger's observation that "The less vividly on stage an action is, the more necessary [existential] *there* becomes."
- c. At first glance, it appears that there is a missing relative pronoun *who*, and indeed the sentence could be corrected in this way. However, if this is produced by a speaker of a topic-comment language, such as Mandarin Chinese, it is possible that the student is using *there* as a topic introducer. Since it is not necessary in English to have a topic introducer, another way to correct the sentence would be to omit *there are* altogether, leaving only *Many tourists visit there*.
- d. *There are a lot of people in my family* would be more appropriate. This sentence may have been produced by a native speaker of Japanese as a way to maintain topic-comment word order.
By way of comparison, when the object of the sentence is a noun phrase that does not include all members of the subject NP, the construction is more acceptable; for example,
Our company has a lot of employees.
- e. *There* and *it* are used in different contexts. *It* is the nonreferential term used in time expressions and should be used in this sentence instead of *there*.
5. a. The difference here is one of discourse context: both (i) and (ii) could be one piece of information in a longer description where the writer is setting the reader up to expect something to happen. Both sentences are marked; (i) places more emphasis on the street and (ii) places more emphasis on the ball by placing it in sentence-final position. (iii) also achieves this latter effect through the use of *there* with "ball" as the logical subject and may simply be a description without any accompanying expectation being aroused in the reader. It is the most common structure of the three.
- b. The first sentence is more formal than the second and is more likely to be heard on radio or TV than in other contexts. The second sentence, especially in its contracted form, occurs far more frequently and represents the typical usage. (Contraction of *it is* to *it's* would make it more informal.)
6. This is an area where the language seems to be changing. Many native speakers will accept and even produce *there is* in contracted form (i.e., *there's*) regardless of whether the logical subject of the sentence is singular or plural. This is particularly true in informal speech.
7. In sentences in (a), where both sentences are literally locative in meaning, referring more to the "here and now," make this word order variation possible; the second sentence could be used as a stage instruction. For this type of utterance, either form expresses the meaning grammatically. However, the sentences in (b) are more abstract since *is* could conceivably be replaced by *exists*. The only way to retain *is* and express this proposition grammatically is to start with existential *there*. This is further evidence against the transformational analysis of existential *there*.
8. The *there* in the first example is exclamatory. It could be paraphrased by a word like *Halleluia!*, which would admittedly be more intense than *there*, but which would serve the same function.

The second example uses existential *there* for a dramatic contrast, used in all likelihood to introduce a really good bread to the listener/reader: "Sometimes the contrast is general versus specific (*There were jazz singers, and (then) there was Ella Fitzgerald*), which is probably an introduction to a discussion of Ms. Fitzgerald.

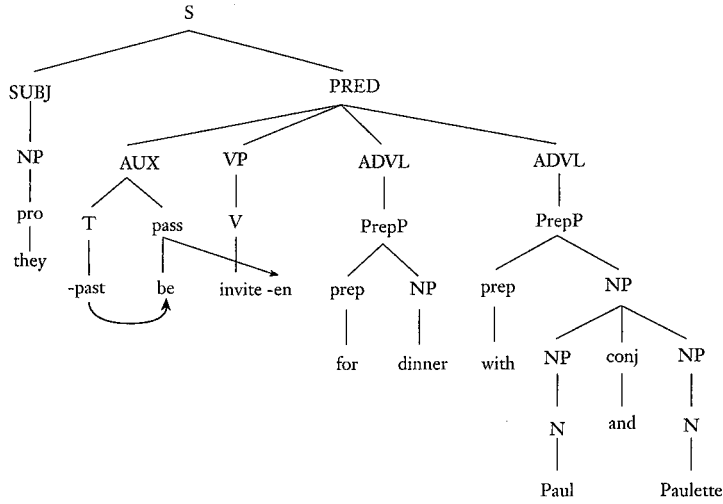
Chapter 24: Conjunction

1. a. coordination My friends bought me dinner and paid for my movie ticket.
 John and Mary wanted to visit the ocean.
- b. coordinating conjunction My friends bought me dinner and paid for my movie ticket.
 John and Mary wanted to visit the ocean.
- c. correlative conjunction Both John and Mary wanted to visit the ocean.
 My friends both bought me dinner and paid for my movie ticket.
- d. *respectively* Elizabeth I and Peter the Great ruled England and Russia, respectively.

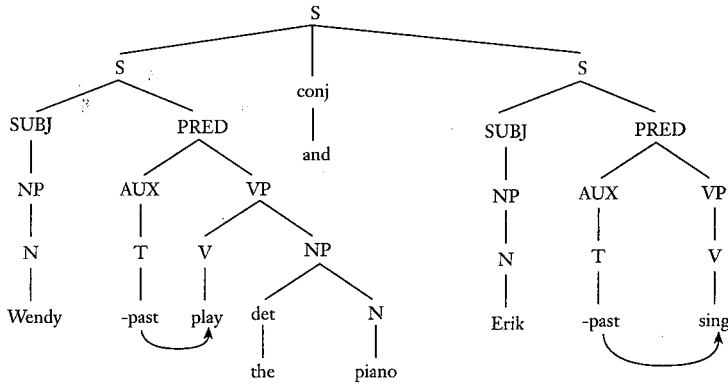
- e. ellipsis
- f. gapping

Harry isn't going to the movies, and Fred isn't going () either.
 She bought a cappuccino, and he ___ an espresso.
 She left in a Ford, and he ___ in a Mercedes.

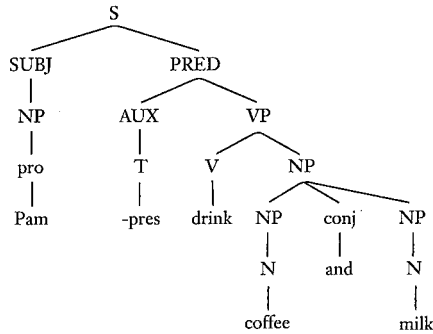
2. a.



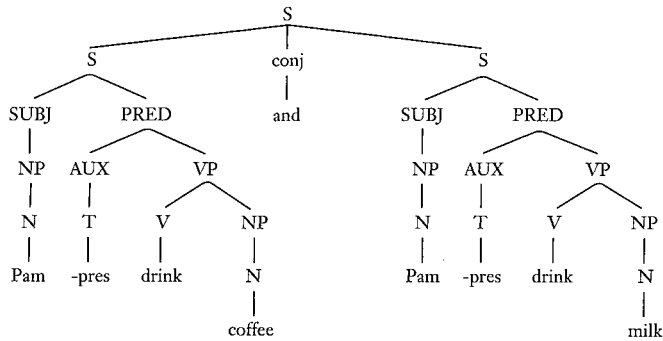
2. b.



3. The ambiguity lies in the fact that the sentence may be interpreted either as phrasal conjunction: Pam drinks [coffee and milk] (i.e., mixed together):



or as sentential conjunction (she drinks them separately):



In this second case, ellipsis of the redundant elements in the second clause is required to bring the tree into line with the surface structure.

4. *Do* can be used to stand for an entire VP, not just a verb, in sentences like the following, where the *do* refers to everything inside the brackets, not just to the verb *believe*:
- She [believes the reports that the politician was lying about his involvement with space aliens during his first term of office], and I do too.

5. a. Since the conjunction *or* presents alternatives, the sentence will be true as long as one of the alternatives enters into a true statement. In this case, each alternative is a singular proper name. Also in this case, the meaning of the sentence makes it fairly clear that *or* will be interpreted exclusively—that is, it cannot be the case that both Helen and Judy will be the president this year.

The student who produced this sentence might be told simply that when he/she uses *or* to coordinate NPs and when agreement is an issue, *or* should be accompanied by a singular verb in the sentence as long as the final of the two (or more) conjuncts appears as a singular NP. (Recall that in cases where singular NPs are coordinated with plural NPs, the proximity principle makes the verb plural if the plural NP is closest: *Either my mother or my cousins are taking me to the mall.*)

A supplementary, meaning-based teacher response to this particular error would be to ask the student how many presidents a club or a company is likely to have in one year. Getting “one” as the response, the teacher can then point out that the student has used a plural verb form, which suggests more than one actual president.

- b. The error here lies in the fact that *too*, an adverb that accompanies coordinated affirmative clauses, should be replaced by its negative counterpart, *either*. Students need to become aware that the patterns are “Yes → too,” and “Not → (n)either.”
- The error is somewhat though not completely parallel to what happens to *some* when it appears in a negative sentence and becomes *any*. Since students at the intermediate level are likely to have a fairly good mastery of *some/any* environments, the teacher might exploit the parallel in giving feedback to a student at this level.
- c. Ellipsis here has eliminated not only the VP (as it normally does) but also the AUX (since *could* is not repeated in the second clause). The sentence would sound much better if the second clause were *the nurse couldn't either*, with the *not* following (and contracted to) the AUX and the adverb *either* completing the negative conjunct.
- d. *Nor* can act as a simple coordinating conjunction, while *neither* cannot. The proper form here is *nor*, which then requires subject-operator inversion and *do* support: *nor did I ask you*. Students might be given this information and presented with a few examples in spoken use, where *nor* will be heard to coordinate after mid-sentence rising intonation or after a full stop (falling intonation); *neither* will generally be heard only after falling intonation, as in *You didn't ask me. Neither did I ask you*. In contexts where both *neither* and *nor* can be used, *nor* is more formal.
- e. The error is simply that where ellipsis of this sort occurs in the VP, there must be some form of adverbial—*too* or *as well*—to complete the proper coordination.
- f. The student has identified the wrong set of relations holding between multiple sentence elements that permit the addition of *respectively*. This adverbial requires the relationship [A & B . . . X & Y, respectively], where the first and second items mentioned in the second conjoined set of constituents apply in that order to the first and second items mentioned in the first set of constituents: *Fred and Bill paid Jim and Paul respectively* (i.e., Fred paid Jim and Bill paid Paul). The sentence produced by the student probably should be expressed as: *Fred and Bill paid each other*. The students need contextualized practice in the use of *respectively* and of reciprocal pronouns.

6. Yes, they can. For example:

They cleaned both inside and outside the house.
 They looked up and down the street.
 This is a government of, for, and by the people.
 Drinks will be served before, after, and during the show.
 I've been in and out of the house all day.

7. a. The following categories can all be co-ordinated with *not only . . . but also*:
- | | |
|---------------|---|
| V + V | They not only hiked but also skied on their trip. |
| VP + VP | They not only hiked in the Ardennes but also skied in the Alps. |
| AP + AP | The hotel was not only very expensive but also hard to reach. |
| prep + prep | The guests were not only inside but also outside the house. |
| PrepP + PrepP | The guests were not only in our house but also on the veranda. |
| AdvP + AdvP | The guests left not only very quickly but also very quietly. |
| N + N | We have visited not only Chicago but also Boston. |
| NP + NP | We have not only a truck but also a sedan. |

Sentences/clauses may not be coordinated in this way without additional changes, as discussed under (b) below:

S + S *Not only you helped me out but also you gave me some new ideas.

- b. An example that is truly clause-to-clause requires subject-operator inversion because of the presence of negation in the first correlative; moreover, the *also* follows the subject in the second clause:

Not only did you help me out, but you also gave me some new ideas.

Not only did she get a scholarship, but she also got a teaching job.

8. In this sentence, it appears that two unlike constituents are being coordinated. It looks as if an AP in the first clause is being coordinated with a PP.

Recall that our PS rules will permit VP to expand with a copula followed by one of three types of constituents:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|--|--|--|----|---|--------------------------------|----|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|-------|--|--|--|
| VP → cop | <table border="0"> <tr> <td rowspan="3"> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>NP</td> <td rowspan="3">}</td> <td rowspan="3">Example: Mary is an architect.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AP</td> <td>Example: John is penniless.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PrepP</td> <td>Example: John is without visible means of support.</td> </tr> </table> </td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | <table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>NP</td> <td rowspan="3">}</td> <td rowspan="3">Example: Mary is an architect.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AP</td> <td>Example: John is penniless.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PrepP</td> <td>Example: John is without visible means of support.</td> </tr> </table> | { | NP | } | Example: Mary is an architect. | AP | Example: John is penniless. | PrepP | Example: John is without visible means of support. | | | | | |
| | | | <table border="0"> <tr> <td>{</td> <td>NP</td> <td rowspan="3">}</td> <td rowspan="3">Example: Mary is an architect.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AP</td> <td>Example: John is penniless.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PrepP</td> <td>Example: John is without visible means of support.</td> </tr> </table> | { | | | NP | } | Example: Mary is an architect. | AP | Example: John is penniless. | PrepP | Example: John is without visible means of support. | | |
| | | | | { | | | NP | | | } | Example: Mary is an architect. | | | | |
| AP | Example: John is penniless. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PrepP | Example: John is without visible means of support. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

It seems possible to place any two of these three constituents side by side when followed by a copula and get a fairly good-sounding sentence as a result because they all refer back to the subject of the sentence. There can be conceptual parallelism rather than structural parallelism in cases like this sentence.

9. The most reasonable explanation might be to say that since *and* alternates with *or* in affirmative/negative structures, native speakers already take the *or* here to be negative and tend to reserve *nor* for more formal discourse contexts such as writing. Such substitution of *or* for *nor* occurs frequently in informal speech.
10. For a student at the intermediate level of instruction, a teacher might not want to respond at all to issues of cohesion, since the entire text is quite clearly written. However, for a student in a writing class who is planning to go on to higher levels of writing instruction, the student should know that the stringing together of multiple uses of *and* from sentence to sentence does not produce normal-sounding academic prose. At the very least, there are many other cohesive devices more specific than *and* to the functions that the writer is trying to perform in the narrative. Specifically, these include relative clauses. The sequence

We began our bicycle trip from my brother's house, and he lived not so far from the mountains ...

can be changed to

We began our bicycle trip from the house of my brother, who lived not far from the mountains ...

Likewise, the sequence

... after about one half-hour we reached the mountains, and it was cooler there ...

can be changed to read

... after about one half-hour we reached the mountains, where it was cooler ...

The teacher can explain to the student that while the prose is grammatical, it is difficult to derive the full effect of a word such as *and* if it is repeated endlessly. Several instances of *and* were not even necessary. They could have been deleted with a semicolon or a period and new sentence with capital letter used instead:

... we felt the warm breeze on our faces and bodies, and after about one half hour we reached the mountains, and it was cooler there.

This very oral-sounding narrative could be better restated in writing as:

... we felt the warm breeze on our faces and bodies. After about one half hour, we reached the mountains; it was cooler there.

Chapter 25: Adverbials

1. a. sentence-initial
- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| (i.) adverb phrase | <u>Very reluctantly</u> , I went through the records. |
| (ii.) prepositional phrase | <u>To please Henry</u> , I went through the records. |
| (iii.) adverb clause | <u>When no one else agreed to do so</u> , I went through the records. |

- b. sentence-final
- (i.) adverb phrase I went through the records very methodically.
 - (ii.) prepositional phrase I went through the records in the office.
 - (iii.) adverb clause I went through the records when I was asked to.
- c. specific or general adverbial of frequency
- specific Lorraine jogs five miles every week.
 - general Lorraine jogs on occasion.
- d. preverbal adverb of frequency
- (i.) positive I often see her brother on campus.
 - (ii.) negative He rarely comes to visit.
- e. phrasal preverbal adverb of frequency
- (i.) positive Beth is almost always on time.
 - (ii.) negative She is not usually late.
- f. adverbial participle Having been up all night, Beth was late this morning.
2. a. It should be *Isn't be ever ...* or *Is be not ever* *Not ever* placement patterns like *not* placement; only if contracted does the *not* stay together with the operator in subject-operator inversion.
- b. The preverbal adverb of frequency can separate only an auxiliary verb or the *be* copula from *not*. Since in this case neither of these underlying forms is present, only two orders are possible:
- Marvin does not often dance.
Marvin often does not dance.
- c. The answer is not given in a full sentence; rather, it occurs in a reduced clause. In such cases, preverbal adverbs of frequency cannot be the final constituent. The order should be *I never am*. Alternatively, the response could be even further reduced to “No, never” or simply “No” or “Never” without the subject pronoun and copula being present.
3. a. If the sentence contains an unstressed auxiliary verb, place the preverbal adverb of frequency after it. Thus, this sentence should be:
- José can sometimes play handball after work.
- b. If a negative preverbal adverb of frequency has been fronted, subject/auxiliary inversion must take place:
- Rarely can we eat outside in the garden!
- Alternatively, the preverbal adverb of frequency could be placed after the first auxiliary verb in the sentence:
- We can rarely eat outside in the garden.
- This second form should be used if emphasis (i.e., exclamation) is not intended.
- c. Adverbs of manner cannot precede direct objects in English. A correct sentence would be either *I speak French fluently*, or *I speak fluently*.
- d. Adverbials of direction or goal (*to seafood restaurants*) come before adverbs of position (*in Boston*).
- e. This is the classic “dangling participle” since the subject of the adverbial participle is not the same as the subject of the main clause (presumably, it is the little girl who is crying hysterically). Since the main clause of this sentence cannot be very easily expressed in the passive, the adverbial participle would have to be changed to a more explicit adverb clause such as *As the little girl was crying hysterically, the mother tried to calm her down*. Alternatively, the main clause would have to be changed to a different proposition to enable *the little girl* to become the subject: *Crying hysterically, the little girl resisted all attempts by her mother to calm her down*.
4. a. The second sentence emphasizes the absolute 100% frequency with which Alice uses dental floss, although both sentences indicate her use of dental floss is habitual.
- b. There is no difference in meaning between these sentences since adverbs of frequency modify the whole sentence regardless of their position, but there is a subtle difference in emphasis and likely use. The sentence-initial position makes *sometimes* more salient since it more often occurs medially, especially in conversation. The sentence-initial adverb can also create a link to previous text.
- c. Again, there is little if any difference in meaning between these two sentences, with the sentence-initial position for the adverb clause giving more salience to it. The sentence-final position is more common in conversation. The sentence-initial position can also be used to tie the utterance back to previous discourse or to signal a shift in topic.
5. a. Probably speaker A expects more specific information about the frequency of B's trips to the beach. B should preferably use an adverb expressing specific or at least general frequency. For example:
- (best) specific B: Every weekend.
(acceptable) general B: Whenever I have the time.
- b. Speaker A is asking a *yes/no* question. Appropriate answers would be:
- No, but I hope to go there some day. / Yes, I've been there twice.

6. In sentence (b), the preverbal adverb of frequency precedes the auxiliary verb, which means that the auxiliary carries emphatic or contrastive stress. There would have to be context to justify this use, e.g., *They said that I didn't tell the truth, but that's wrong because I always HAVE told the truth.*

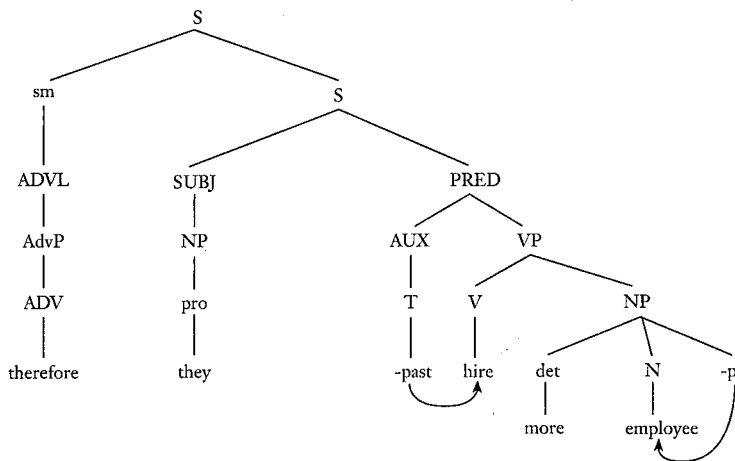
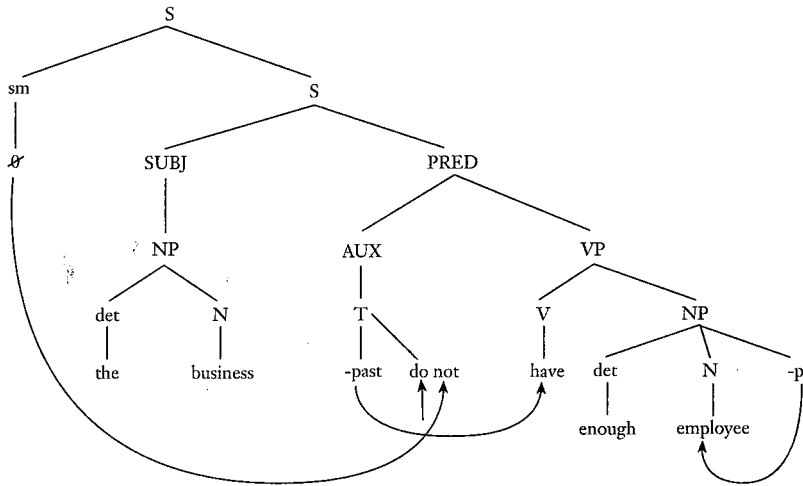
In sentence (a), the auxiliary verb has reduced stress, and the sentence is in the unmarked form; that is, it is not emphatic. It is a regular declarative utterance.

7. Time adverbials (*at 10 P.M.*) usually come before adverbials of frequency (*every day*) so sentence (a) is the more common. Sentence (b) is not incorrect, however, but it is more unusual and makes the time adverbial sound more like an afterthought. The student should be advised to keep to the order in sentence (a) if in doubt.

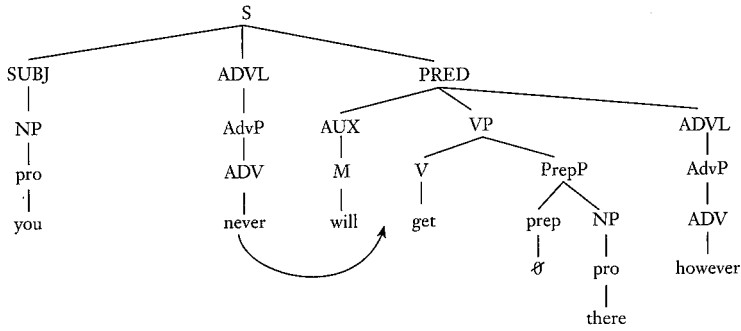
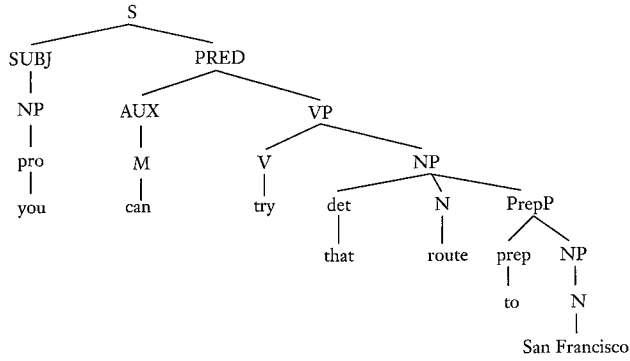
Chapter 26: Logical Connectors

1.
 - a. adverb subordinator She attends dance class because she likes the exercise.
 - b. linking adverb Sara dances well; however, Naomi is more graceful.
 - c. concessive connector Although she is late, I still believe she'll be here.
 - d. time connector Whenever vacation comes, I get a cold.
 - e. purpose connector He went to summer camp so that he would learn to play basketball well.
 - f. causal connector Consequently, he got a basketball scholarship.
 - g. inferential connector They had a lot in common so they became good friends.

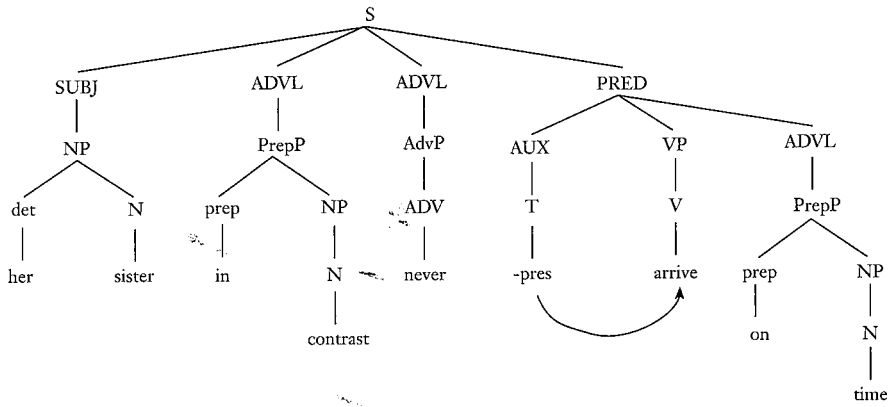
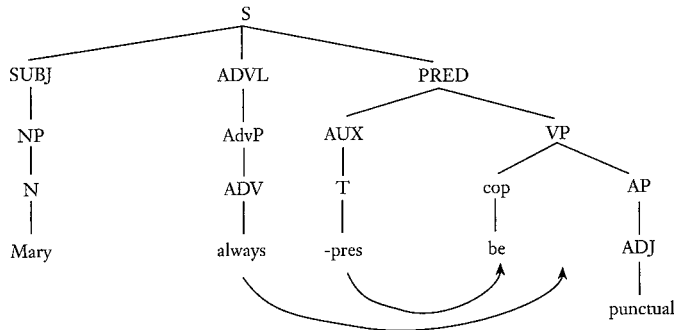
2. a.



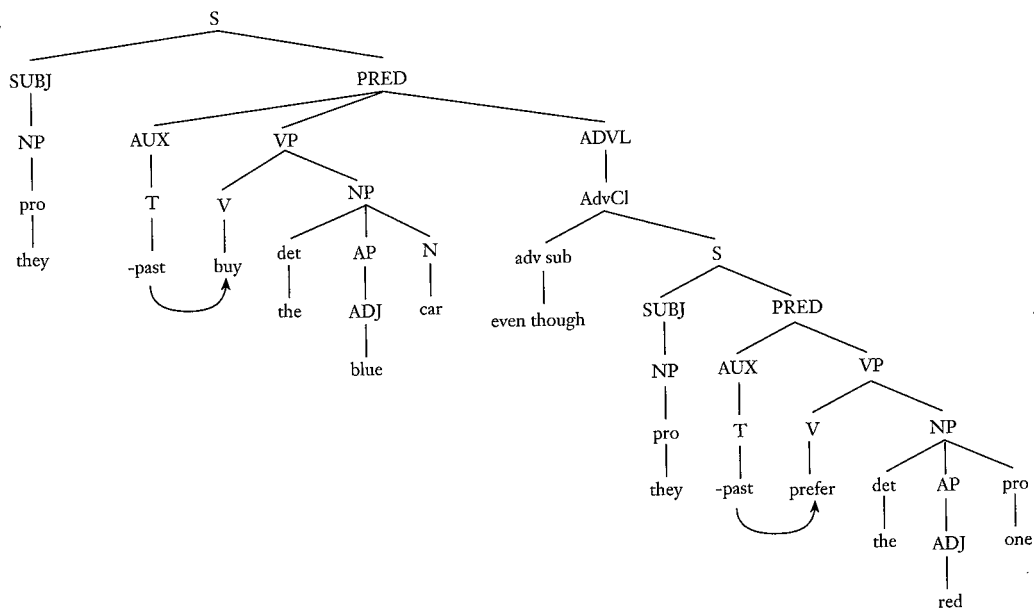
2. b.



2. c.



2. d.



3. a. The error is one of meaning/use. *On the contrary* is not appropriate here since it most often signals that there is a contradiction between the truth of the proposition expressed in an initial sentence and the truth of that in the following sentence before which the adverbial occurs. What is expressed here is a simple contrast between "...lots of trees in Oregon" and "few trees in Arizona," so *on the contrary* should be replaced by *in contrast*.
 - b. The error is one of punctuation. Specifically, the comma after the word *class* suggests that there is rising intonation at the end of this clause, but in fact the normal reading is one with falling, end-of-sentence intonation. The comma should be replaced by a period (full stop). A capital *A* should begin the next sentence. Alternatively, a semi-colon could replace the first comma.
 - c. The error is inappropriate punctuation. No commas should be used before and after *although* because it begins a subordinate clause in final position.
 - d. The error is misuse of *nevertheless*, which suggests that there is a denial of expectations created in the first clause by the content of the second clause. However, no expectations are reasonably created by the first clause: to say that crystal glasses break very easily suggests nothing about the fragility of plastic glasses. This is once again best expressed as a simple contrast: *Crystal glasses are very fragile; in contrast, plastic glasses are stronger*.
 - e. The error is one of form. *While* is an adverb subordinator, and thus the clause that follows it is a subordinate clause, which can't stand alone. The *while* clause should simply follow the preceding clause without any punctuation or capitalization.
4. In the two examples given, *plus* cannot be an adverb subordinator, since the period at the end of the prior sentence marks falling intonation, and adverb clauses do not normally stand alone as full sentences. Moreover, we could not reverse the order of the two clauses, beginning the sentence with *plus*, and get an acceptable sentence as a result.

It is also doubtful that *plus* is a conjunctive adverbial. This is so because it does not seem that we can insert the *plus* at any point other than S-initial position and get an acceptable sentence as a result:

- They had to drive five miles out of the way.
- ?They, plus, had to drive through the mud.
- ?They had to drive through the mud, plus.

(However, if native speakers actually judge these sequences as acceptable, that would constitute evidence of conjunctive adverbial status.)

If *plus* fails these two tests, we are led to classify the word as a coordinating conjunction.

5. a. A student who produces this sort of sequence may be told that there are both form and meaning reasons to avoid it. Structurally, an *although*-clause is grammatically subordinate to the other clause; structurally, a *but*-clause is grammatically equal to the other clause. There is, therefore, a structural contradiction when *although* and *but* are used together in this way. One should use one or the other but not both together.

As far as meaning is concerned, the student can be told that while one can express simple additive relationships with correlative conjunctions, one cannot express contrastive relationships in this way. The effect of juxtaposing *although* and *but* is a highly confusing for native speakers, since it seems as if two contrasts are somehow involved, when only one is actually intended.

- b. It might be worthwhile to explain orally to a student that commas are regularly associated with a single kind of intonation in most structural positions—specifically a rising intonation, which is not used with *as a result* by native speakers. If the student is fairly fluent in the spoken language, a teacher can model the sentence with a somewhat exaggerated intonation contour and then ask the student if they actually hear this intonation in this context (just prior to *as a result*). If the student is not very fluent in the spoken language, the teacher can at least explain and model the relationship between intonation and punctuation and point out that a semicolon or period is needed before *as a result*.
- c. The error here is that the wrong connector is used. The student can be told that when *on the contrary* is used, we expect some overt marker of negation to occur in the first clause, and we also expect there to be some implication of falsehood associated with the first clause. If the student simply wants to contrast two people or things, a proper connector would be *in contrast* or *however*.
- d. Changing *so* to *then* would solve the problem since *if* and *then* can be used together in such contexts, but not *if* and *so*.
- e. The student seems to understand the contribution of *even* to the sentence but may not be aware that when it occurs before a clause, *even* must appear in the combination *even if*, *even when*, *even after*, *even before*, prefacing an adverb clause. It may simply be pointed out that there is a syntactic difference between *even* and *even if*, and a few contrastive model sentences may be shown to the student:

Even my friend is here. We work even on Sundays.

(*even* + NP) (*even* + PrepP)

Even before you left, I was worried about you.

(*even before* + adverb clause)

Even if my friend is here, I won't be happy.

(*even* + subordinator + adverb clause)

- 6. It is not necessarily easy to explain to a student why advertisers, novelists, or news columnists may take liberties that student writers are not supposed to take in academic writing. One reason for punctuating sentence fragments in this way may be to highlight or stress both clauses for dramatic effect. In the deodorant ad, both the product and the reason for using it are stressed by means of short, pointed statements; one does not feel that the reason-clause is subordinated in the same way as *because*-clauses are normally subordinated. Why is it not possible for a writer of formal academic discourse to follow the same pattern of writing adverb clauses? It simply seems to be the case that effecting a sense of equal stress in this way is not a prescriptive option in formal academic writing.

Another reason for punctuating in this way may be to achieve the effect of an afterthought clause, a clause which was not originally planned for when the clause prior to it was written. In such cases, a teacher might point out to students that in highly planned academic discourse, writers do not usually present clauses with the intention of signaling to the reader that a certain clause was intended as an unplanned afterthought.

- 7. Such student writing, overfilled with cohesive expressions, is commonly seen where teachers have overstressed the need for such devices to mark meaning relationships among sentences. One way to begin would be to ask the student to eliminate exactly half of the expressions, asking with each eliminated expression whether the intended meaning relationship is adequately conveyed without the expression. (Of course the teacher's personal judgement will be of great value here.) It would also be worthwhile to point out to the student that one does not normally use the expression *moreover* in simple lists of items; there must be a more complicated relationship, one most often involving evidential support, for this expression to be used effectively.

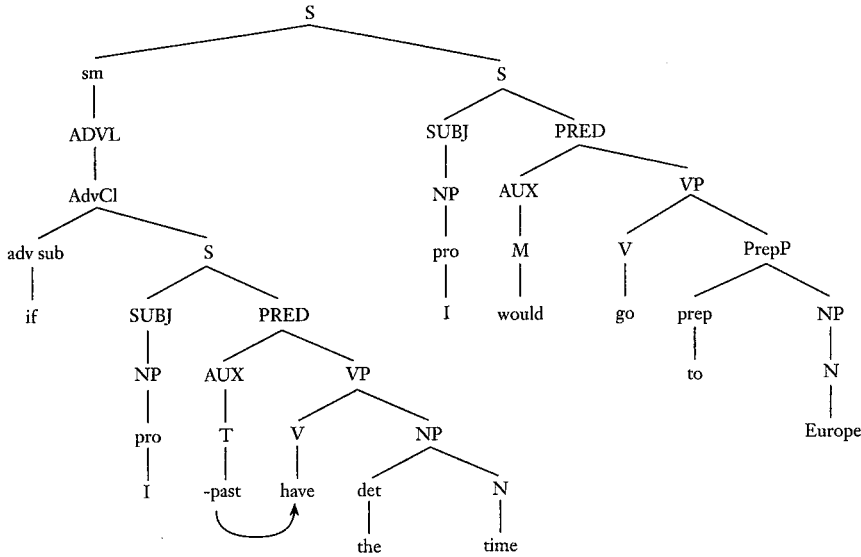
Another possibility would be to present the writer with a page or two of fairly formal expository prose and ask the student to locate all of the linking adverbs in the sample text. After underlining them, the student might calculate the relative frequency-per-number of words of these expressions and see that it is quite possible to be an effective writer without using linking adverbs to excess.

Chapter 27: Conditionals

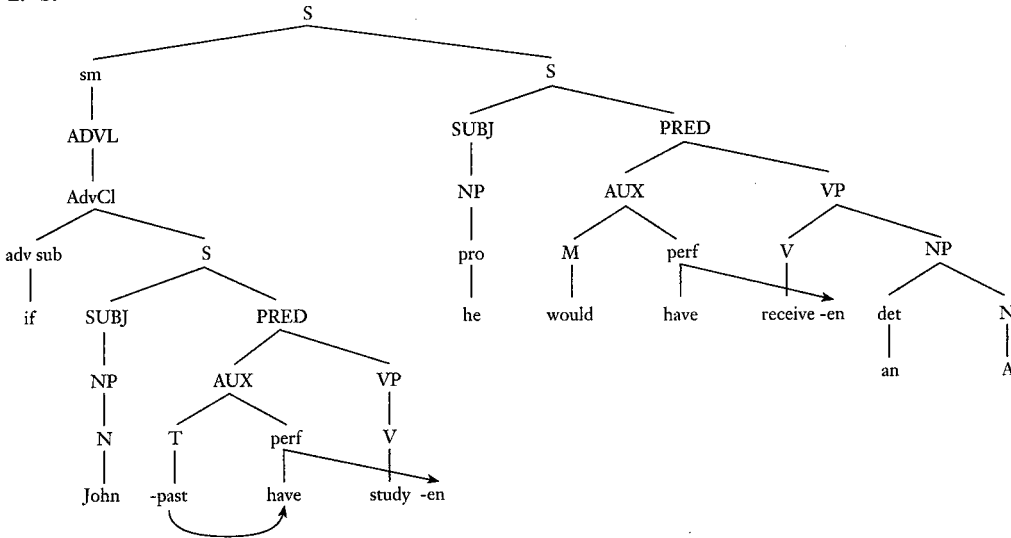
- 1. (often the entire sentence is the example—not a specific word or words)
 - a. factual conditional
 - (i.) generic Water freezes if the temperature gets below 0°C.
 - (ii.) implicit inference If it's 9 o'clock, the library is closed.
 - b. future conditional
 - (i.) weakened result clause If the snow keeps melting so fast, there may be a flood.
 - (ii.) weakened *if* clause If it happens to be nice on Friday, we can always go sailing.
 - c. counterfactual conditional If there had been less snow cover, the bulbs would have suffered greater damage.

- d. contrastive use of a conditional I'll let you off this time, but if you do it again, you're really in for it.
- e. subjunctive use of *were* If that dog were here now, you would know it.
- f. *if* deletion with subject/
auxiliary inversion Had we known, we would have been there.
- g. conditional clause pro-form Do you have a reservation? If so, go right in.
- h. sarcastic use of conditional If you had any brains, you'd be dangerous.
- i. hypothetical conditional If I felt more energetic, I would weed the garden.

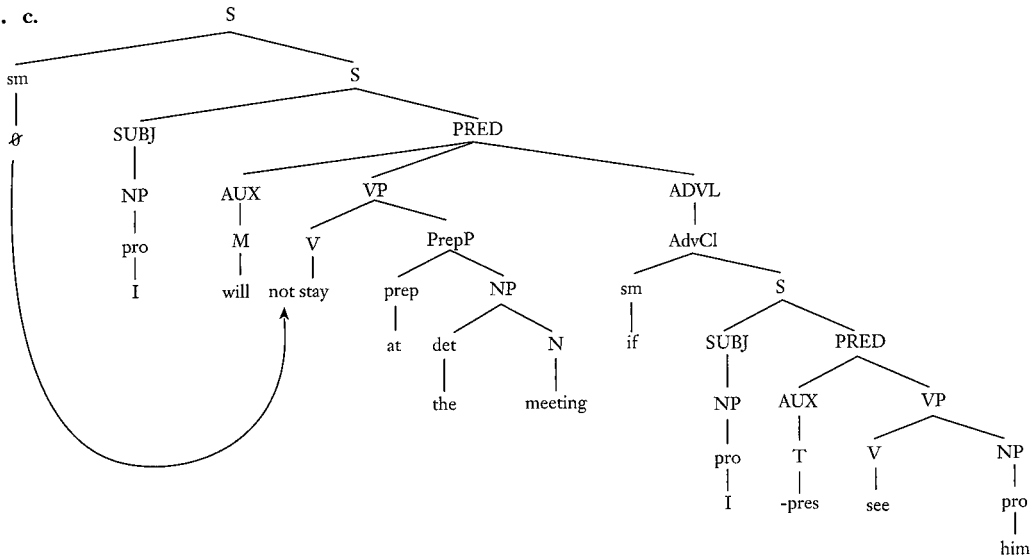
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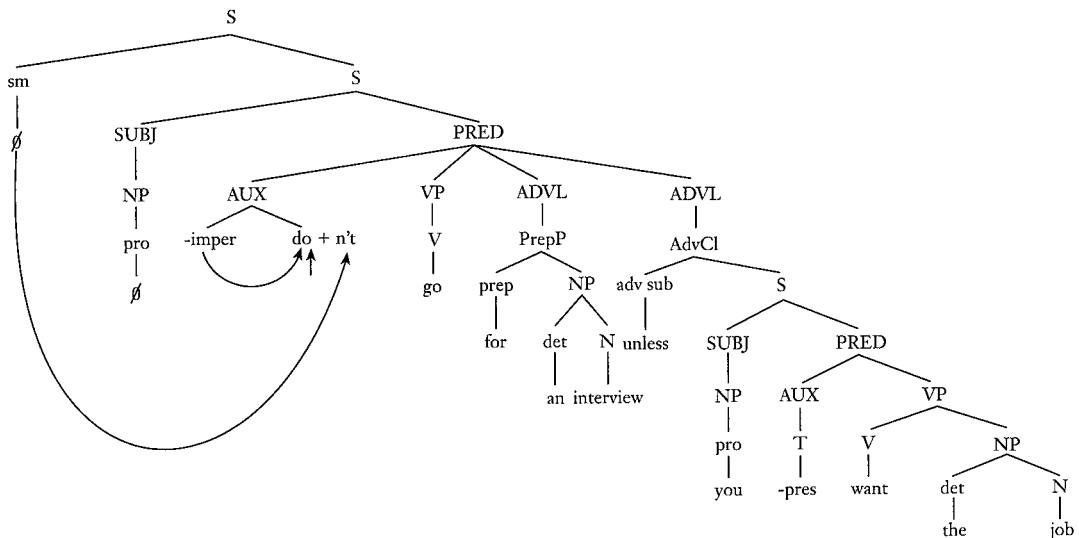
2. b.



2. c.



2. d.



3. a. Implicit inferential factual conditionals should have the same tense and aspect or modal in both clauses. This should be:

If she was there, she did the work.

Alternatively, this sentence may be a counterfactual conditional referring to past time, in which case it should be:

If she had been there, she would have done the work.

where the main clause should contain *would* + perfect.

b. The normal pattern for future conditionals is to have a present tense in the *if* clause. Thus, this sentence should read:

If John is free, I'll invite him.

Alternatively, the conditional clause could be weakened by using *should*, not *might*:

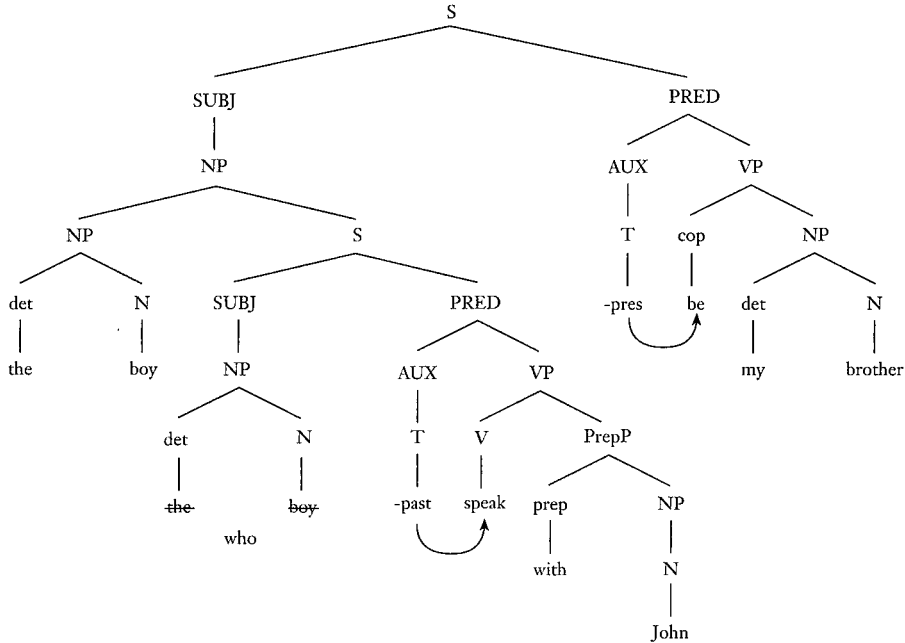
If John should be free, I'll invite him.

- c. The *if* clause almost always precedes the result clause in tautologisms. The sentence should be:
If Sally's bringing Harry to the party, she's bringing Harry to the party.
- d. This *if* clause really does not mean "on the condition" so much as "on the assumption." In such cases of "strong deductions," the *if* clause precedes the *then* clause. Even if the *if* clause is not fronted, *then* does not typically begin a conditional sentence. The only circumstance in which this sentence might be acceptable is a conversation in which the speaker is trying to elicit a deduction from the other person, and in this context the sentence would be an uninverted *yes/no* question (i.e., *then* is being used much like *so* in this position):
Then he'll keep his word if he made a promise?
4. a. If the sentence is a present factual conditional, then the simple present should occur in both clauses:
What happens if I push this button?
If the sentence is a future conditional, then *will* is needed in the result clause:
What will happen if I push this button?
If the sentence is present hypothetical, then *would* is needed in the result clause:
What would happen if I pushed this button?
- b. The same tense should be used in both clauses of this factual conditional. Since this is a habitual factual, and the "habit" still obtains, present tense should be used:
Why do some Americans say, "Gesundheit," if someone sneezes?
- c. There are three possible ways to correct this sentence:
(i.) Since the *only if* adverb clause has been fronted, subject/operator inversion is necessary in the main clause:
Only if you help me, will I study for the quiz.
(ii.) Do not front the *only if* adverb clause:
I will study for the quiz only if you help me.
(iii.) Weaken the condition by dropping *only*:
If you help me, I will study for the quiz.
5. Both of these sentences are colloquial variants that are not consistent with what traditional grammar prescribes. Prescriptive usage would call for subjunctive *were* to be used in the *if* clause in the first sentence, since it is a present counterfactual conditional clause.
The second sentence is a hypothetical conditional. Prescriptive usage would lead one to expect a simple past tense in the *if* clause, rather than the modal *would* the use of which results in a "double *would* construction."
Thus, your answer to your student's question depends upon a definition of correctness. The sentences your student reports are not prescriptively correct—that is, they do not adhere to the rules in a grammar book—but they are produced by, and acceptable to, native speakers in informal conversation.
We have encountered this discrepancy between grammar book rules and native speaker usage many times. Which rules you teach and whether you present or allow any variation from these will presumably depend upon how *you* use the language and who your students are and why they are studying English. For example, if you are uncomfortable with the colloquial variants, which we claim many native speakers use, and if you are teaching in an EFL context where your students are concerned with obtaining a high score on a standardized language proficiency examination, then perhaps only the prescriptive rules should be presented and practiced. On the other hand, if your students are adult immigrants in an ESL situation, perhaps you would choose to teach both the prescriptive rules and colloquial variants.
6. This is a future conditional. It is more complicated than those described in this chapter since the main clause contains both the *will* modal to signal future time and the *have to* phrasal modal to signal necessity. Phrasal modals may be used in the main clause of a conditional to express additional meaning—in this case, the phrasal modal expresses the necessity of Father's mowing the lawn.
7. Do on your own. Answers will vary.

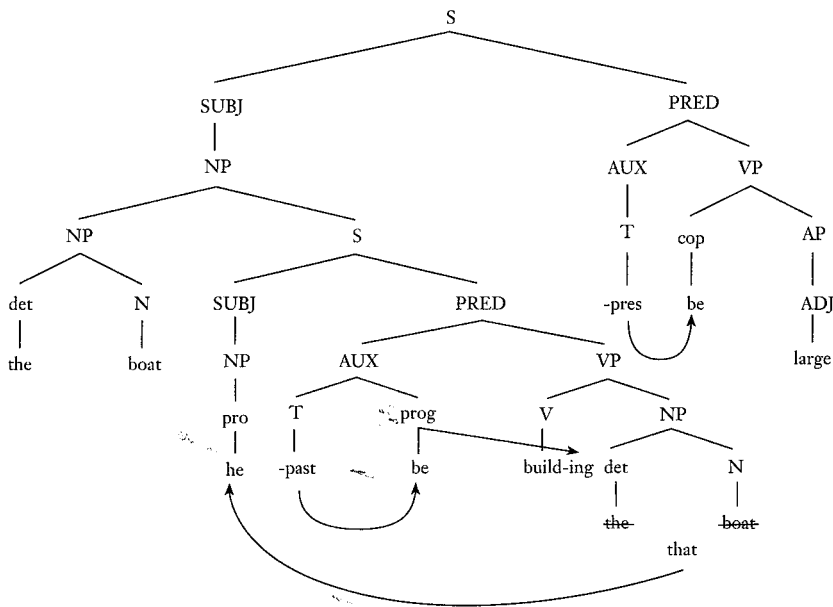
Chapter 28: Introduction to Relative Clauses

1. a. restrictive relative clause She's the one who has the books in her arms.
- b. relativized object of a preposition Isn't she the one about whom you asked?
- c. relativized subject The teacher who left was unhappy.
- d. relative pronoun substitution The package (the package arrived yesterday) is for Christmas.
 → The package (which arrived yesterday) is for Christmas.
- e. relative pronoun deletion Sally raved about the sale that they are having downtown.
 → Sally raved about the sale ___ they are having downtown.
- f. relativized possessive determiner Julie is the student whose birthday we'll be celebrating next week.

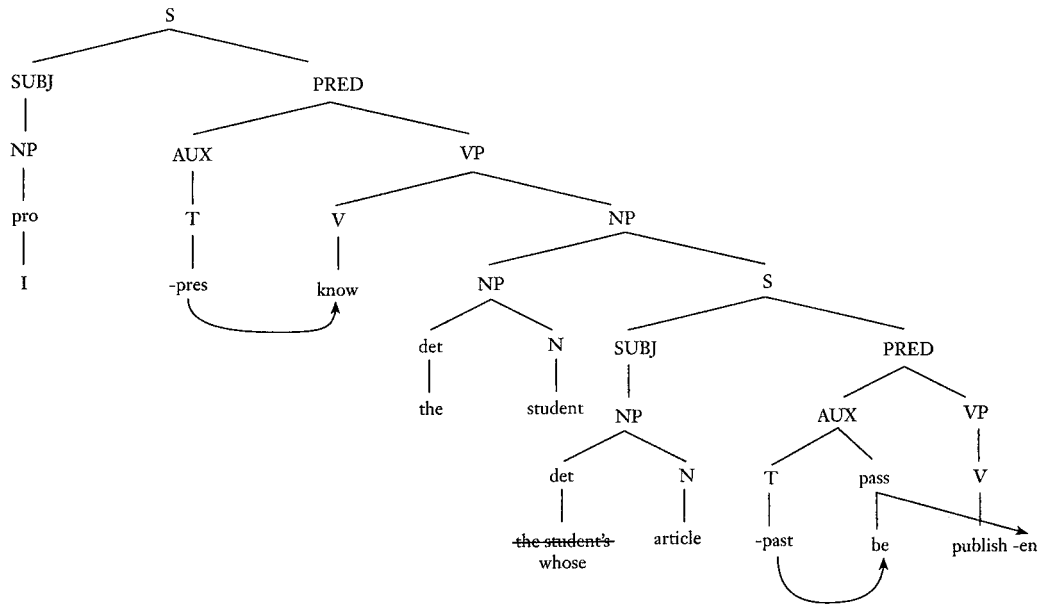
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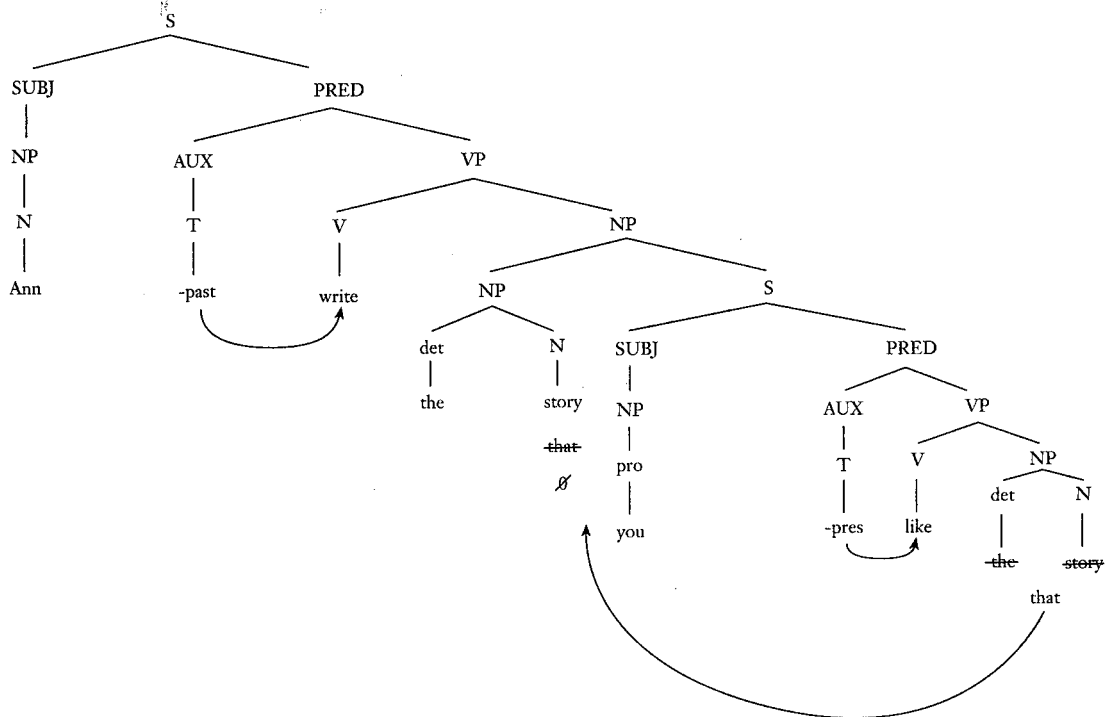
2. b.



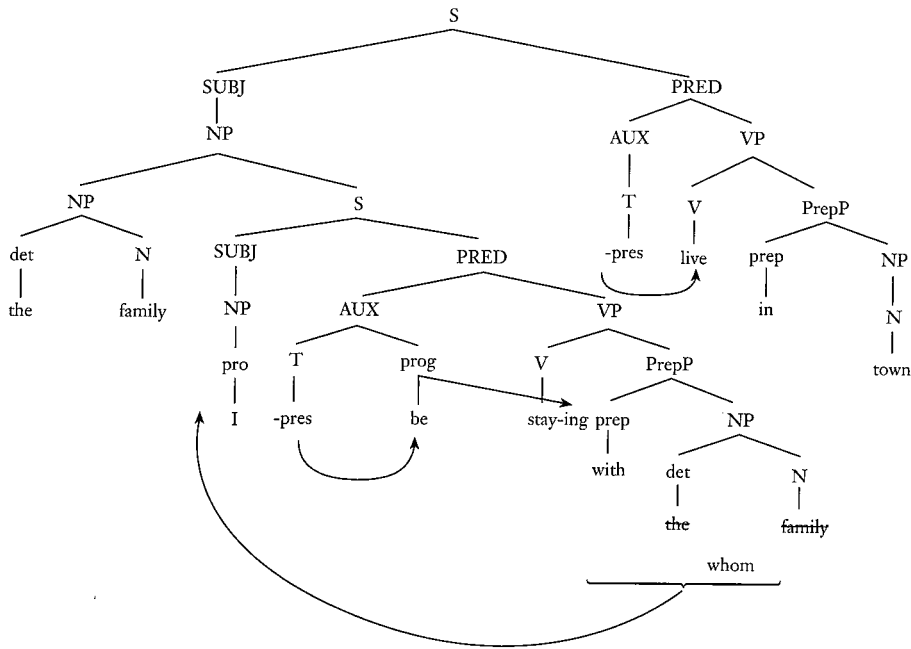
2. c.



2. d.



2. e.



3. a. *Who* is a relative pronoun that substitutes for NPs marked (+ human). *Which* or *that* would be appropriate relative pronouns to substitute for the (- human) subject *river*.
 b. The relative pronoun *that* cannot be used to replace the relativized object of a preposition if the preposition is fronted with, and thus precedes, the relative pronoun. *Whom* should be used as the relative pronoun in this sentence since the antecedent is (+ human) and the relative pronoun is the object of a preposition.
 c. The head noun *story* must be fronted along with the relativized determiner *whose* when relative pronoun fronting takes place since *whose* modifies the head noun *story* (*I thought about the man whose story we heard.*)
4. a. *Whom* should be *who* or *that*, since the relative pronoun that is being replaced in the embedded sentence is the subject (*The woman is walking towards us.*) *Whom* replaces (+ human) NPs only in object position.
 b. The pronoun *him* should be deleted since *who* (or more formally, *whom*) was substituted for *the boy* and was then fronted within the embedded sentence. Several languages can retain a pronominal reflex of a relative pronoun, and so this sentence may be the result of interference from the student's first language.
 c. The relative pronoun *who*, which is the subject of the embedded sentence, has been deleted. Subject relative pronouns are not deletable in English; however, relativized objects are.
 d. The embedded relative clause *that she is wrapping* must be placed after the noun that it is modifying (i.e., *the package*). Not all languages have the relative clause following the noun it modifies as is the case in English.
 e. *They are friendly* could be an embedded relative clause, in which case, its subject is coreferential with the object of the main sentence, *people*. Thus, the pronoun *they* should be replaced by the relative pronoun *who* or *that*. Another possibility is that an adverb subordinator is missing: *I like people if they are friendly.*
5. In the first sentence, the person (the stranger) called you; and in the second sentence, you called the person (the stranger). Structurally, this means that in the first sentence, the relative pronoun replaced the subject of the embedded sentence; in the second sentence, the relative pronoun replaced the object of the embedded sentence.
6. *That* can be used with either human or nonhuman antecedents, although in formal written English, *who* may be preferred for humans. Some confusion may also have arisen here due to the fact that the newspaper is quoting (in writing) what Smith produced when speaking; thus, while his use of *that* probably escaped notice during the actual interview (since it is common oral usage), once it is in the written form, it becomes subject to an overly prescriptive editorial standard. In fact many publishing houses (in their style sheets) say that for restrictive relative clauses writers should use *that* to refer to non-human antecedents and *who* to refer to human antecedents. Such a rule has its own problems because it ignores cases where relative pronouns occur after prepositions, and the choice is *whom* or *which*.

Chapter 29: More on Relative Clauses: Nonrestrictive and Relative Adverb Clauses

1. a. relative adverb substitution If we only knew the place (in which → where) we were staying, I would rest more easily.
- b. free relative substitution I had to think about (the thing that → what) she had told me.
- c. relative pronoun + *be* deletion The boy _____ doing handstands is my son. (*who is* has been deleted)

- d. head noun deletion
- e. relative adverb deletion
- f. appositive
- g. nonrestrictive relative clause
 - (i.) appositive type
 - (ii.) evaluative type

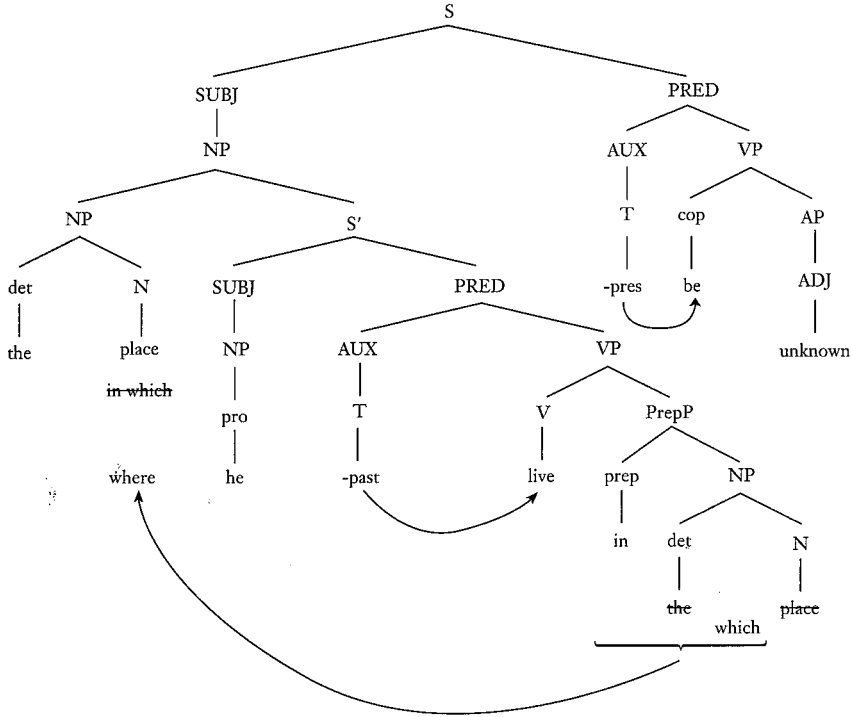
I'm trying to remember _____ where we met each other. (*the place* has been deleted before *where*)

By the time _____ I arrived, the excitement was over. (*when* has been deleted)

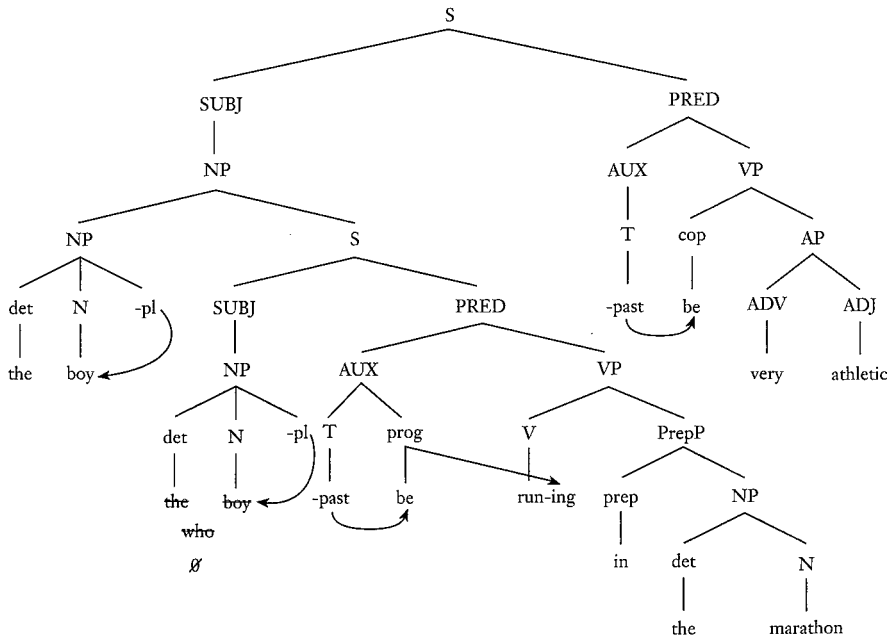
Amherst, a center of higher education, is a home for several major colleges.

Chris, who is a Beethoven fan, appreciates classical music.
He also likes jazz, which we didn't expect.

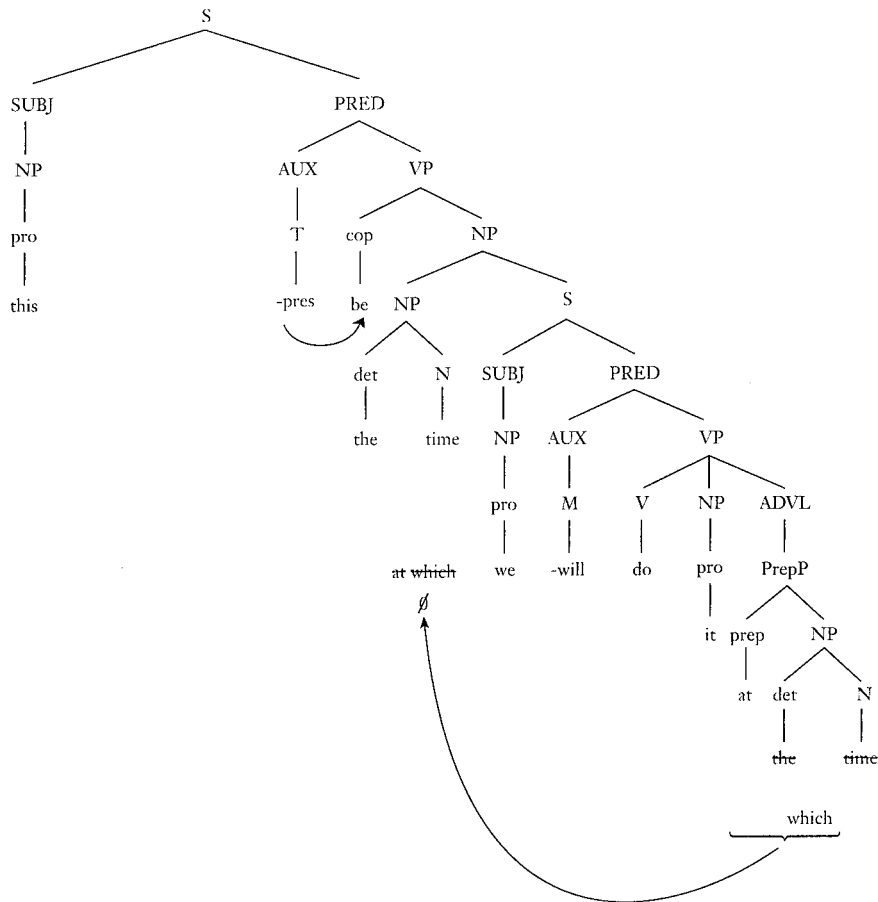
2. a.



2. b.



2. c.



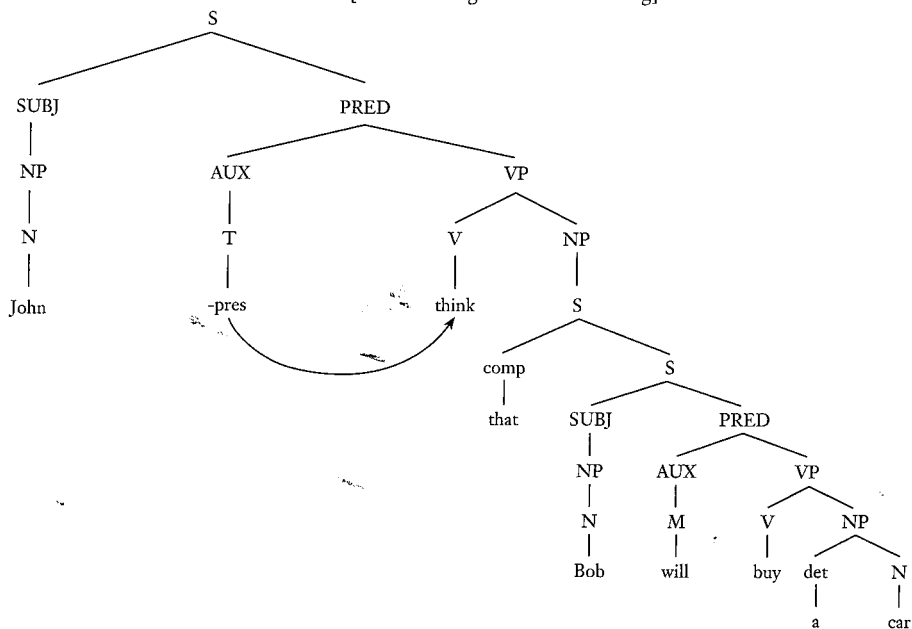
3. a. The relative adverb *when* is supposed to substitute for the preposition + relative pronoun. When relative adverb substitution is properly applied, the following sentence results:
 Christmas is the time when he's busiest.
 If relative adverb substitution does not occur, the preposition + relative pronoun would be retained:
 Christmas is the time at which he's busiest.
 One could have a sentence without either form (i.e., Christmas is the time he's busiest) but not one with both!
- b. A nonrestrictive clause may not modify a head noun preceded by the generic determiner *any*. A restrictive clause should be used. Delete the commas.
- c. There are three possible reasons for the ungrammaticality:
- (i.) Relative pronoun deletion took place, and the preposition was incorrectly deleted along with the relative pronoun. If the preposition had not also been deleted, the following would have been produced:
 This is the office I work in.
 - (ii.) Of course, if relative pronoun deletion had not occurred, a grammatical sentence would also have resulted:
 This is the office which I work in. This is the office in which I work.
 - (iii.) Finally, this sentence may be ungrammatical because the relative adverb *where*, which replaced *in + which*, was incorrectly deleted. If this had not occurred, the sentence would have been:
 This is the office where I work.
- d. The inanimate relative pronoun *which* has been used to refer to human engineers; *whom* should be used instead.
- e. When the head noun (*the time*) is the object of a preposition (*by*), the relative adverb (*when*) is ungrammatical. *That* can be used here (or no relative pronoun):
 Burt will have raised \$20,000 by the time (that) the fund-raising drive ends.
 Alternatively, the relative adverb *when* could be used to replace the entire PrepP:
 Burt will have raised \$20,000 when the fund-raising drive ends.

- d. This is a *wh*-cleft. What follows the extra form of *be* is emphasized. We can easily reconstruct an equivalent neutral sentence:
He said that you are a good friend.
5. a. When a negative preverbal adverb of frequency is fronted, subject-auxiliary inversion must take place. This sentence should be:
Never have I tasted such a delicious sandwich!
- b. This is an incorrect form of a *wh*-cleft. The emphatic constituent following the extra *be* form is not a person; therefore the *wh*-word should not be *who*. The *wh*-word should be *what* instead:
What you mean is that Oscar did it.
- c. When a participle phrase is fronted, subject-operator inversion is required:
Sitting on the front porch was my long-lost brother.
6. Do on your own. Answers will vary.
7. a. Sentence (1) is the emphatic or *wh*-cleft equivalent of sentence (2). One could imagine (1) being said after the speaker had already said (2), and the listener then asked for repetition.
- b. In sentence (2), the adverbial has been fronted as compared with sentence (1). In sentence (2) the delayed subject receives more focus than the normal subject does in sentence (1). Gary (1974) suggests that a sentence like (2) would be more apt to be chosen when the speaker or writer has made the listener or reader expect that someone other than the missing child would be standing in the corner.
- c. Sentence (1) is a normal affirmative imperative; sentence (2) is an imperative with emphatic *do*. The *do* receives strong stress and gives positive emphasis to the invitation.
- d. Sentence (2) contains emphatic *own* before the object NP; sentence (1) is unmarked in this respect. One could imagine sentence (2) being uttered in a context in which the speaker was annoyed that Jim was always borrowing the speaker's (or someone else's) book rather than having his own book.

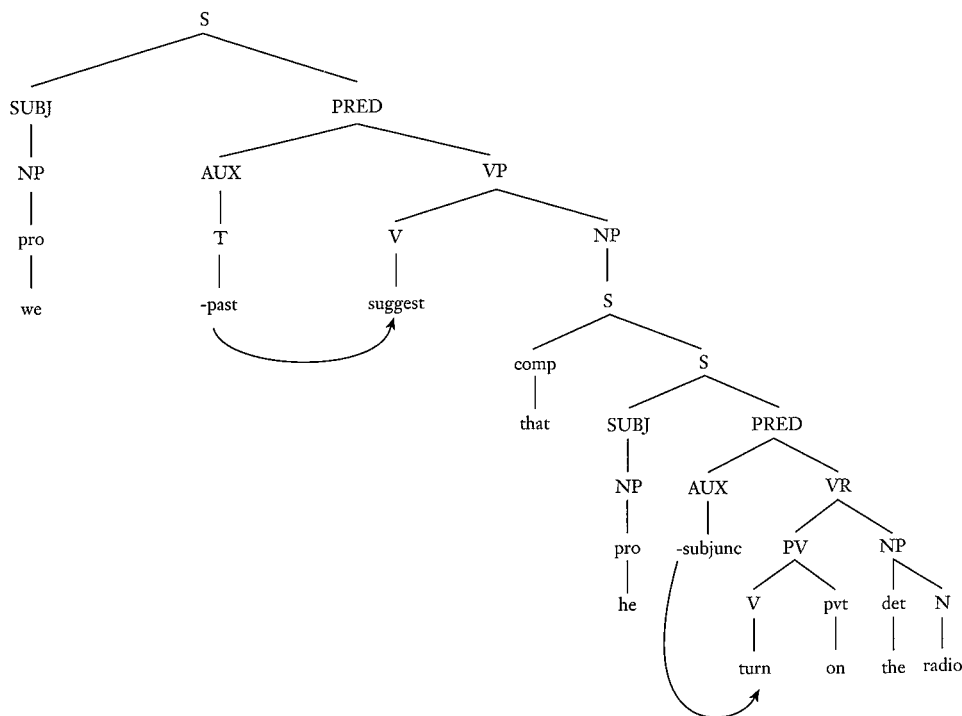
Chapter 31: Complementation

1. a. complement John thinks that Bob is funny.
 b. complementizer John thinks that Bob is funny.
 c. tensed *that*-clause complement Everyone knows that the earth is round.
 d. subjunctive complement I demanded that he go there.
 e. infinitive complement He wanted to see them.
 f. gerund complement I enjoy reading spy novels.
 g. subject + participle construction I saw John crossing the street.
 h. purpose infinitive We stopped to see my cousin.
 i. the Bolinger principle I remembered to tell him that he didn't pass.
 (for gerunds vs. infinitives) [remembering occurs before telling]
 I remembered telling him that he didn't pass.
 [remembering occurs after telling]

2. a.



2. b.



3. a. The verb *want* requires an infinitival complement; it cannot take a *that*-complement. (i.e., *I want my brother to come home for New Year's.*)
- b. The verb *insist* requires a *that*-clause complement—in this case, a subjunctive complement. (i.e., *My friends insisted that I come with them.*)
- c. The verb *force*, although it is a semantically highly manipulative verb, requires a *to*-infinitive as its complement. (i.e., *The teacher forced us to drink hot chocolate.*)
- d. The verb *understand* falls into the *believe*-type class of verbs, not the *want*-class. It requires either a tensed *that*-complement or an infinitival complement with *myself* instead of *for me*. (i.e., *I understood that I was the winner./I understood myself to be the winner.*)
- e. The word *over* is a preposition that requires an NP object. Only a gerund can appear as the object of a preposition; therefore, the required form is *going*, not *to go*. (i.e., *They disagreed over going to the movies.*)

4. Agree:

She agreed to make a salad. *attempt*-type infinitive (same subject)
 She agreed that she would make a salad. tensed *that*-clause

Argue:

They argued that nothing could be done. tensed *that*-clause

Assist:

They assisted me to climb the stairs. *advise*-type infinitive (S1 object = S2 subject)
 They assisted me in climbing the stairs. object + prep. *in* + gerund

Beg:

They begged Mr. Day to give easier homework. *advise*-type infinitive (S1 obj = S2 subject)
 They begged to enter the castle. *attempt*-type infinitive (same subject)

Dare:

Will you dare to jump over the canyon? *attempt*-type infinitive (same subj)

Keep:

They kept me waiting. subject-participle construction
 They kept making me wait. gerund complement

Notice:

John noticed that Mary was running. tensed *that*-clause
 John noticed Mary running. subject-participle construction

Resist:

He couldn't resist eating more chocolate. gerund complement

Suspect:

The police suspected that John was guilty. tensed *that*-clause

5. The essential informational difference between *try to* + V and *try* V + *-ing* is that with the infinitive, the action referred to is generally thought not to actually happen, while with the gerund, it does—even if for only a short duration. Teachers can exploit these differences within single sentences by juxtaposing situations where someone *tried to* + V but did not *try* V + *-ing*. For instance,

I tried to learn bungee jumping, but I never actually tried doing it.

Since listeners will not wish to accept a contradiction in meaning here—and many will think there is, in fact, a contradiction—they will likely seek the only interpretations of *try* in which the entire sentence could be true.

Other sequences can be presented to students where two clauses are coordinated, and where the second clause clearly indicates whether the action was hypothetical or fulfilled:

You can try to open this lock, but you won't succeed.

You can try opening this lock; then you can see what's inside the box.

I tried to work on my car, but I just couldn't get started.

I tried working on my car, but I got tired halfway through the job.

After looking at such examples, students can get together in groups and make lists of things which they have *tried to do* but not actually *tried doing*. This may be largely a list of their own heroic failures! It will include (perhaps) schools to which they have applied but at which they have not been accepted, sports that were too formidable to engage in, long-term projects that either were or were not ever begun, and so on. It may also simply be a recent school assignment. The students can then read their lists to the class as a whole.

6. From the first sentence, most native speakers get the idea that the students in question engaged in a discrete act with a beginning and an end—the act of drawing pictures from beginning to end, i.e., the pictures were finished. From the second sentence, we get instead a picture of students in the *process* of drawing pictures, with no commitment as to whether the pictures necessarily were completed. The student can be told that the difference is mainly one of what is *focused* on—the completed act or the process.
7. In *I expect to leave by 4:15*, a speaker may be focusing on the exact moment of four o'clock and intends to convey, "When the clock strikes four-fifteen, I will leave." It might also be possible to mean, "At the point when the clock strikes four-fifteen, or at some point before that, I will leave." In *I expect to have left by 4:15*, a speaker conveys the idea, "When the clock strikes four-fifteen, you will not find me there: I will already be gone." Thus the crucial difference lies in the question of whether the speaker may be leaving, or will definitely have left a certain place at 4:15.
8. This strategy may have some value as a heuristic strategy at lower levels of instruction to get students using a large percentage of verbs with the correct complements. The reason is that *-ing* complements are the least common type of clausal complement. However, as this chapter has shown, the facts of English complementation are not this simple. First, many verbs can take *either* a gerund or an infinitive complement, as with the verb *try* in Exercise 5 above, and as with *continue*, *begin*, *like*, *regret*, and many others. Second, many verbs take neither infinitive nor gerund but instead *that*-complements. Finally, there are a variety of infinitive types that may be unnecessarily confused if infinitive complements are all lumped together in one category.
9. a. The error in this case is a natural one since there are both syntactic and semantic reasons for adding a *to* to the sentences. The student may be following the pattern of verbs like *force* or *cause*, both manipulative verbs which take *to*-complements. But in the case of the verbs *make*, *let*, and *have*, no *to* is possible. Students might be told that no *to* occurs mostly when there is a closely interactive relationship between two persons—where both are intimately engaged in the fulfillment of an event. Then, verbs like *force* and *cause* might be presented as more the exceptional cases—where close interaction is present, but where *to* is present (given that *make*, *let*, and *have* are much more frequent).
- b. This error is very likely a transfer error from certain languages that permit two constituents in the initial complementizer position of sentences. A student can be told simply that English does not permit two complementizers (i.e., words of this sort) at the beginning of the sentence and that the student should choose the more descriptive of the two words—in this case, the word *where*, which conveys place. (In contrast, *that* is more or less semantically empty.)
- c. This is an extremely common error. English has [V + *-ing*] patterns with *go* like the following:
- We will go swimming.
They went singing through the streets.
- English also has purpose infinitive—V + infinitive—patterns like the following:
- We will go to the stockbroker to check on our investments.
We will go overseas to visit our parents.

The student may be blending these two patterns and producing ungrammatical sentences. In this case, students can be told that where they are expressing a purpose, they should use an infinitive. Also, the use of the preposition *for* + gerund rather than *to* + base form may be due to L1 transfer. They might also be told to test what they are saying by asking themselves whether *in order to* would fit in the place of the simple infinitive of purpose.

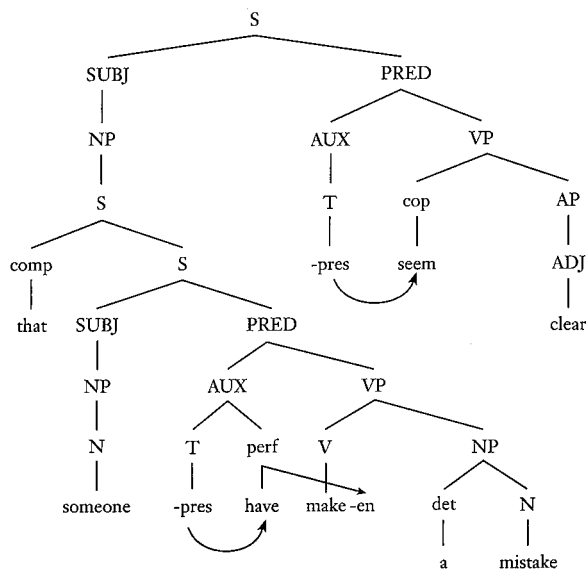
- d. Such errors might be addressed in terms of the redundancy present in them. By saying that the officer demanded something, it follows that I had to do something, since police officers are normally authorized to demand certain types of behavior of people. Deleting the 'had to' in the complement avoids saying the same thing twice:

The officer demanded that I show him my license.

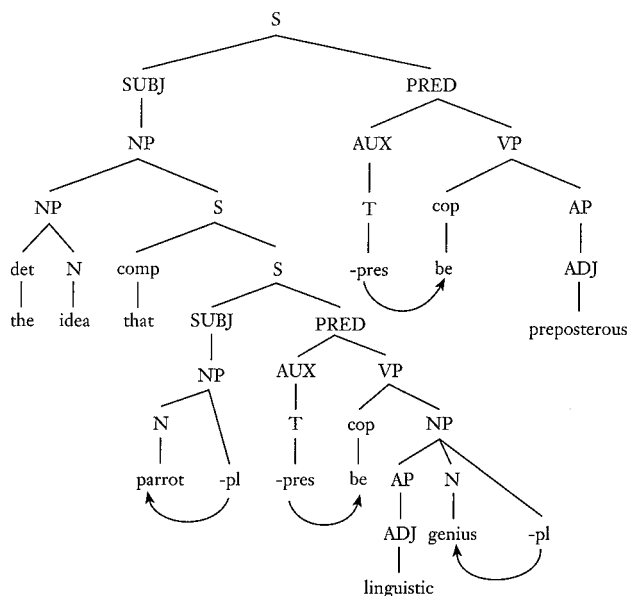
Chapter 32: Other Aspects of Complementation and Embedded Clauses

1. a. subject raising (It seems John is sick today) → John seems to be sick today.
[lower subject becomes higher subject]
 - b. complex NP The landlord threw the tenants out due to the fact that they were making too much noise.
 - c. adjective complement She is willing to help us out today.
 - d. clausal subject To do that now would be a mistake.
That she couldn't make the trip disappointed everyone.
 - e. extraposition [That he won't give us better leads] is too bad
→ It is too bad [that he won't give us better leads].
 - f. *easy-to-please* constructions (It's hard to crack black walnuts) → Black walnuts are hard to crack.
[lower object becomes higher subject]
 - g. complex passive It is believed that the swindler has escaped to France.
It would be a shame for this painting to be ignored.
 - h. factive verb We noticed that John had bought a new car.
2. a. This sentence can be corrected by raising *John* to subject (i.e., *John seems to be a successful businessman.*). Alternatively, *It seems that John is a successful businessman* is the correct form if raising does not take place (add *it* as subject).
 - b. The prepositional construction *due to* requires an NP object complement. In this sentence, a full clause erroneously takes the place of an NP (i.e., *due to its cost*) would satisfy the structural requirement here.
 - c. The problem here seems to be that there are two constituents in subject position—the infinitive and the semantically empty *it*. Either the infinitive must be extraposed (*It's interesting to watch Tanya skate.*), or the *it* must be deleted (*To watch Tanya skate is interesting.*).
 - d. When a tensed *that*-clause appears in subject position, it is not possible to delete the complementizer; *that* must be present in the surface form of the sentence: *That nobody ever complains. . .*

3. a.



3. b.



4. a. The teacher can point out to the student that in English, (i) every clause with a tense has an expressed subject, or (ii) every main clause has an expressed subject. Since the student will probably recognize that the word *it* contributes little if anything to the meaning of the sentence, the teacher can exploit this knowledge in explaining that the subject requirement is so strong that even where the full meaning of the sentence is conveyed without a lexical subject, a subject must be “brought in from outside” to fulfill the requirement (i.e., *It is not true that Olivia...*).
- b. There is a strong likelihood that the student is producing this pattern along the analogy of grammatical sentences like *I was happy to see my friend*. In view of that, a teacher might set the two types of sentences side by side and contrast them, asking the following questions:

?was easy to walk that far.

Question: *Who or what* was easy? Answer: *Walking* was easy.

?was happy to see my friend.

Question: *Who or what* was happy? Answer: *I* was happy.

The semantic differences associated with the two constructions should then be clear.

Part of the reason such sentences are produced may be that English pronouns are nearly always unstressed. This means that when a nonnative speaker hears native speakers produce the sentence *I thought it was easy to walk that far*, the learner may hear *I* where the native speaker says *it*. A teacher might then contrast for the student the phonetic difference between the two words in such contexts: if the word were *I*, it would be pronounced quickly as [ai] or [a], while the word *it* would be pronounced as a quick reduced [ɪt] or [ət].

- c. One possibility is for the teacher to point out the similarity of this sentence to what one usually finds in passive constructions—which makes the student’s error look somewhat logical. Both here and in passives, an NP that is not an agent—not a performer of an action—is being put in subject position. However, the subject constituents originated in different types of syntactic construction. The student can be shown the equivalent paraphrase without the object-to-subject raising: *It is boring to watch this kind of movie*; the student will probably recognize that it is not possible to say **It is boring to be watched this kind of movie*. Then the student can be told that whenever he/she produces this construction, he/she should also be able to produce the other.
5. One other way would be to try to substitute the relative pronoun *which* or *who(m)* for *that*. Compare:

We saw clouds that looked like feathers. (... *which* looked like feathers.)

We heard the news that rain was coming. (... *which* rain was coming.)

Another way would be to isolate the embedded clause and try substituting a pronoun like *it/he/she/they* for *that*. The results should work for the relative clause but not for the complex NP clause:

They looked like feathers.

(*It/*He/*She/*They) rain was coming.

6. The verb *see*, as normally used, in a case like (a), is factive. To consider another case, if someone says, "Today I saw the president on the White House lawn," another person who knows of the president's whereabouts might answer, "No, you didn't see him in Washington, because the newspaper says he's in Japan this week. You thought you saw him." This is a standard test for factivity.

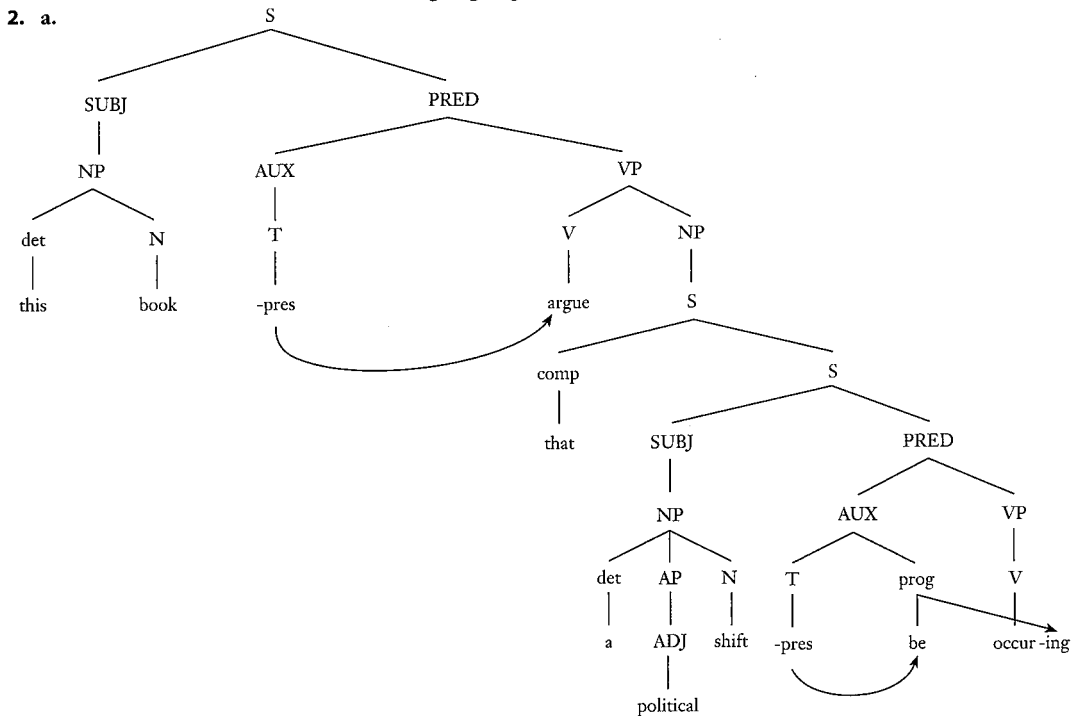
However, it is common to speak of drunken or delirious people "seeing things" like snakes, as in sentence (b). Perhaps because we are not talking of a "normal" state of consciousness, the normal factive quality of the verb seems to be suspended and the verb is non-factive.

One use of the verb *understand*, as in sentence (c), seems factive. Consider this case: If someone says, "I now understand that the earth is flat after all," a likely answer would be, "No, you don't understand that, because the earth isn't flat." If the first person later changes his/her mind, he/she would likely say, "I thought I understood that the earth was flat, but I was wrong." (It would be far less likely to hear him/her say, "I used to understand that the earth is flat.")

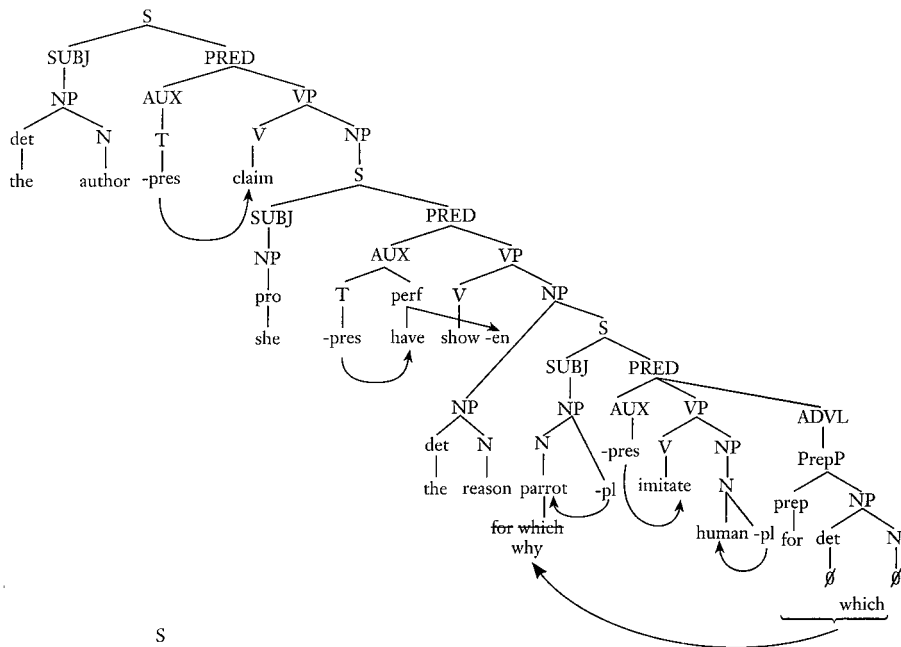
At the same time, it is common to report on what one has heard someone say in terms of what one has "understood," as in sentence (d). It is a common hedging device to say things like, "I understood Sheila to say that she was from Houston; did I hear her correctly?" It leaves open the possibility that the speaker may have been mistaken about what Sheila said. In this use, *understand* might be taken to be nonfactive.

Chapter 33: Reported Speech and Writing

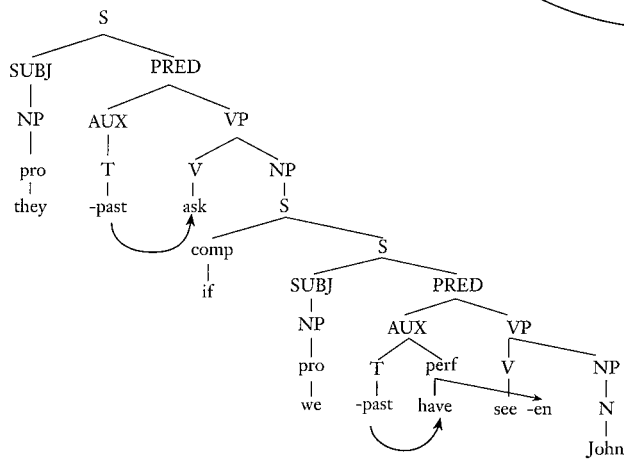
- | | | |
|-------|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. a. | reported <i>that</i> -clause | The president announced <u>that taxes would be cut this year.</u> |
| b. | indirect imperative | The teacher said <u>to finish the homework by Monday.</u> |
| c. | indirect <i>wh</i> -question | My friend wanted to know <u>how much the car cost.</u> |
| d. | indirect <i>yes/no</i> question | My friend wanted to know <u>if the car had air bags.</u> |
| e. | backshifting | ("Do you <u>have</u> time to help me?") → She asked me whether I <u>had</u> time to help her. |
| f. | deictic time-adverbial shift | ("Do you have time <u>now</u> ?") → She asked me if I had time <u>then</u> . |
| g. | deictic place-adverbial shift | ("Can you come over <u>here</u> ?") → He asked me if I could go over <u>there</u> . |
| h. | deictic pronoun shift | ("Are <u>you</u> busy?") → She asked <u>me</u> if <u>I</u> was busy. |
| i. | reporting noun | The reporter's <u>claim</u> that the couple was marrying was false. |
| j. | factive reporting verb | Most people have <u>understood</u> that the globe is getting warmer. |
| k. | nonfactive reporting verb | Meteorologists have <u>argued</u> that the globe is getting warmer. |
| l. | emotional-state reporting verb | My friend <u>complained</u> that it was getting hotter every year in the summer. |
| m. | free indirect discourse | She said to me, why should she be the one to ask the question first? |
| n. | zero-quotative | "Do you want to meet after class?" "Sure, why not." "Then where are we going to go?" "I don't know, you tell me." |



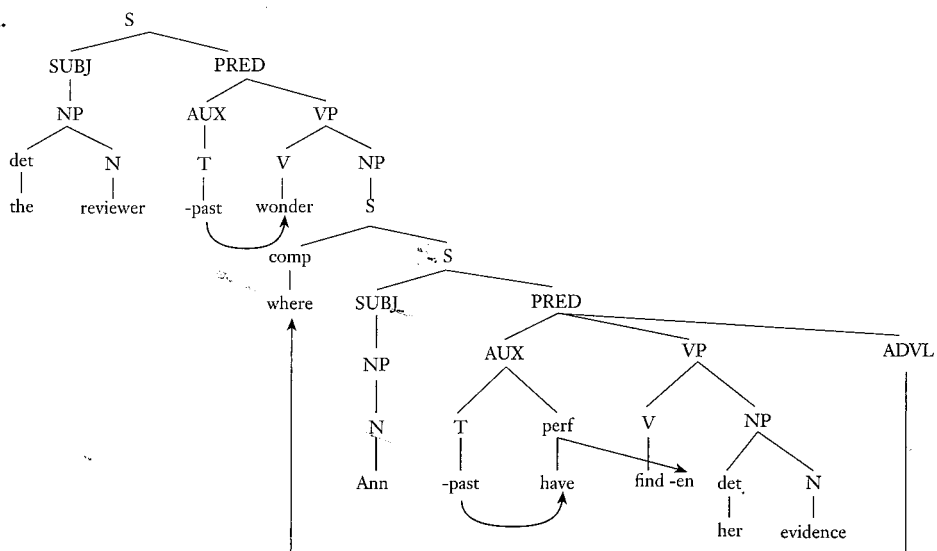
2. b.



2. c.



2. d.



3. a. In Standard English, indirect questions require normal, uninverted subject-verb-object word order. The sentence as written exhibits main-clause question word order, in which subject-operator inversion has applied. Instead it should be:
We were asked if we had the time.
- b. The verb *inform* requires a *that*-clause complement, not an infinitival one. The verb *have*, therefore, needs to be inflected (*that his license has expired*).
- c. The choice of infinitive complement is correct, but the speaker/writer has inserted a tense-carrying *do* into the infinitive; infinitives are tenseless and do not take *do* support. The correct form is *to not shop at another store*.
- d. English permits only one complementizer per clause. Here, two complementizers have been chosen (*whether* and *that*). The correct one to use here is *whether*.

4. The intended interpretation of the first sentence is that Smith believes that no alternative to petroleum exists and the interpretation of the second is that Smith thinks DNA cannot account for the facts in question. However, in each sentence two reporting devices are used. This makes it seem as if *Smith* and *he* are two different persons and that Smith is reporting on what the second man believes or has said. Each sentence therefore sounds like a “report-on-a-report,” but this is not likely to be the intention of the writer of the report.

There are at least two possible explanations for the fact that it sounds more acceptable to see *in his opinion* following the *say/believe*-attribution. One explanation is that the original quotation began, “In my opinion . . .”; in that case, the expression *in his opinion* constitutes a paraphrase of his exact words. A second possibility is that this is an example of “free indirect discourse,” in which case the paraphraser is “taking on the identity” of Smith in a semi-indirect, semi-direct fashion, and expressing what he believes is Smith’s opinion. The final sentence avoids the problem in the first two by indirectly reporting exactly what Smith said; however, in such paraphrase “in his opinion” could be deleted or incorporated into the reporting phrase: *In Smith’s opinion, DNA cannot account for these facts. / It is Smith’s opinion that DNA cannot account for these facts.*

5. The difference is that in the first sentence, one is projecting forward from the time of speaking, while in the second, one is projecting forward from a point in the past that has already been established in prior discourse. Thus, *next week* is in the real future from the point of view of the speaker/writer; for that person, *next week* has not occurred yet. *The next week* may or may not be in the real future for the speaker/writer, depending on how far distant in the past the established reference point is; if this point is (say) a month previous to the moment of utterance, then *the next week* is already three weeks past.
6. One possibility is to do recorded interviews of native speakers talking about conversations they have had about their own or others’ plans, asking them to recount as fully as possible what these plans were. This may elicit the desired type of structures. A more direct method would be to record news broadcasts of newscasters talking about events; some of these events should be in the past, and some of them should be projected in the future by the newscaster. The researcher should then have native speakers watch these broadcasts and have the respondents give as full an accounting as possible of what they heard the newscasters say. The following time-categories should be looked for:
- events in the past for both newscaster(s) and your native-speaker reporter
 - events in the future for the newscaster(s) and in the past for the reporter
 - event in the future for both newscaster(s) and reporter

In looking at the data given by respondents, the researcher should see whether the sequence-of-tenses rules are followed consistently across all three categories. If they are not followed consistently, the researcher should check to see whether some pattern exists in the inconsistencies. It may be that the respondents exhibit a tendency to pattern certain tenses with certain types of verbs. It may be that the respondents fail to follow the rules in just those cases listed in this chapter as exceptions—where general truths are expressed, for example. It may be that the researcher can detect inconsistencies wherever a respondent seems to exhibit excitement or other emotional involvement in making a report. It may be that no pattern at all can be detected—that there may seem to be “free variation.” It is certainly possible that previously undiscovered patterns, together with explanations for them, may emerge from a data-based study of this type.

7. a. There are two problems in this sentence. The first is that the predicate *be not sure* takes a *whether/if* complement (*I’m not sure if...*); the second problem is the missing subject (probably “I”) in the embedded *yes/no* question, which should appear after the *if* complementizer: *I can go or not*, since it needs to follow statement word order, i.e., *I’m not sure if I can go or not*.
- b. *That* introduces an indirect declarative and cannot be followed by a *wh*-question word such as *how*. In addition, the verb *ask* must be followed by a subjunctive *that* complement (e.g., *My mother asked that I plan to raise my grades*). If, instead, the learner intended to produce an embedded question beginning with *how*, *that* should be deleted leaving the *wh*-word in the complementizer position. A tense or modal must also be added, e.g.,

My mother asked how I $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{could plan} \\ \text{planned} \end{array} \right\}$ to raise my grades.

- c. The verb *insist* takes a subjunctive complement, not an infinitive complement. The correct form is *My father insisted (that) I work harder*.
 - d. Only indirect quotations are introduced by *that*. This is a fully direct quotation and so the *that* needs to be deleted.
 - e. The verb *tell* cannot take an indirect object with *to*; only a simple NP recipient may follow *tell*. Sequence-of-tenses would also seem to dictate that *now* be replaced with *at that time* or the like. (*I told him that it wouldn't be possible then*.)
8. This student is careful to indicate that all of the information reported on comes directly from Mr. Walter's article. In that respect, it is a competent paraphrase/summary. However, it can be explained to the student that the number of overt citations can be cut back considerably without losing the sense that citation is taking place. For example, the third sentence, *He tells us that there are several reasons for this*, can be simplified as *He gives us three reasons*. Then, these three reasons can be enumerated without any explicit reference to Walter; readers of the paraphrase/summary will properly infer that the reasons are Walter's, not those of the student, since any alternative interpretation would be unreasonable in the context of the paraphrase. The writer can then be advised to return to a direct reference to Walter in the last sentence.
9. Do on your own. Answers will vary.

Chapter 34: Degree—Comparatives and Equatives

- 1. a. the comparative construction Sam has more clothes than Evelyn.
 - b. the equative construction He has as many clothes as Ben.
 - c. irregular comparative adverb Margaret sings better than her brother.
 - d. absolute use of an adjective That's a beautiful painting.
 - e. use of an adverb to express degree The "bullet" train travels faster than any other train in Japan.
 - f. correlative comparative The bigger they are, the harder they fall.
 - g. unmarked comparative adjective How old is your daughter?
2. a. The ambiguity comes from the fact that there is a reduced clause following the complementizer *than*. The full clause could be either:
Phyllis likes Carol more than Sue likes Carol.
or
Phyllis likes Carol more than Phyllis likes Sue.
- b. The ambiguity derives from the two possible meanings of the phrase *as well as*. It could be expressing the degree of similarity in their teaching ability; that is, both Mark and Ralph teach Sam equally well. *As well as* could also mean *in addition to*, which in turn has two possible readings:
Mark teaches Sam. In addition, Ralph teaches Sam.
Mark teaches Sam. In addition, Mark teaches Ralph.
3. a. adverb *far*
- b. determiner *two*
- c. noun *oranges*
- d. verb *costs*
- e. adjective *interesting*
4. *Less* is a marked form that often sounds rather awkward. The usual way to avoid it is to use the negative polarity form with the comparative when such a form is available—in this case, the adverb *worse*:
Joan sings worse than Sally.
- or to use a negative equative in order to soften the message:
Joan doesn't sing as well as Sally.
- Another possibility is to make *Sally* the subject of the sentence and to use a positive polarity adverb (this would be the least marked form):
Sally sings better than Joan.
5. a. Since *short* is a one-syllable adjective, the *-er* suffix should be used when making comparisons: *shorter* rather than *more short*.
- b. *Better* is the irregular comparative form of the adjective *good*. There is no need for *more*, since it unnecessarily and incorrectly marks the comparative a second time.
- c. This comparative construction is incomplete. While *than* is present, the sentence contains neither *-er* nor *more*. Two-syllable adjectives ending in *-y*, like *lucky*, take the *-er* suffix in the comparative; that is, *lucky* should be *luckier*.
- d. The equative construction (*as X as*) and the comparative (*more X than*, or *X-er than*) have been confused. The negative equative construction here should be *not as X as*, instead of *not as X *than*. Thus the construction should read "not as realistic as."
- e. The structure of the reduced clause must be parallel to that of the main clause. Adding the demonstrative *those* to the reduced clause will bring about the necessary parallelism and thus achieve grammaticality:
The newspapers in Los Angeles have better international coverage than those in San Diego.

- b. The periphrastic superlative *most* has been used where the superlative suffix *-est* is required on a one-syllable adjective like *cold* (i.e., *February is the coldest month in my country.*).
- c. The syntactic context (a preceding *the*) and the semantic context (an indication that something is first on a scale of importance) necessitate the use of a superlative form:

The first and *most* important thing ...

- d. The student has incorrectly used the superlative form of this irregular adjective. The comparative form *worse* is required here.
 - e. The student has used *too*, which is used to express excess, when the semantic context (the positively evaluative adjective *tasty*) suggests that the intensifier *very* is what is intended. This may be due to overgeneralization from the colloquial use of *too* as a counterpart to *very* in negative contexts. Note that very exaggerated intonation could also make the utterance acceptable in some colloquial contexts, but the more common usage should be emphasized with students.
6. If you agree with us that comparatives and superlatives are quite different syntactically and semantically, you may choose to teach the comparative form at one time and then come back to the superlative form at a later time. This problem is greatest if your students speak languages without morphologically distinct comparative and superlative forms. Finally, the forms should be contrasted.
 7. As we have tried to indicate, this is an oversimplification of the difference between comparatives and superlatives. Whether a speaker chooses to use a comparative or superlative to a large extent depends upon the speaker's perspective, not upon the number of things/people being compared.
 8. Safire is perhaps making the point that the rules of superlative formation are complicated, variable, and not universally adhered to and therefore can be violated when an author is striving to achieve a certain effect. Note that he quotes writers, who did most of their work in the 19th century (the language is changing), and that Twain was a humorist, who frequently engaged in language play.

Chapter 36: Conclusion

(No exercises)

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Note: The symbol “n” means that the information is in an endnote rather than in the main text.

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