

IIT Madras

ONLINE DEGREE

Basic English
Professor Shreesh Chaudhary
Retd. Professor, IIT Madras
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
Lecture No. 44
Word Order

(Refer Slide Time: 00:14)



WORD ORDER

SHREESH CHAUDHARY



Good afternoon, welcome to this, the module on grammar as part of this course in English. After talking about phrase structure, we are going to talk today about the order of words in phrases and sentences generally. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:37)

Word order, which word can come after which word, is fixed in English.

- In English, a question sentence, also called “Interrogative Sentence”, begins either only with “Is/Are/Am/Was/Were/Will...”, etc. or with “What / When/ where / which / who / why...?”, etc.



Every time two entities, two units, two things, two words, or two people, come together, a rule applies. That is the case also with word order. What is the meaning of word order? It means which word can come after which word. In many languages, there is a great deal of much flexibility. But in English, generally speaking, word-order is mostly fixed. Actually, English grammar in my opinion has only two rules, that is why it is so easy to learn this language. They do not have rules of gender, that you do not have to worry whether the table is masculine gender or chair is feminine gender.

But this is one problem here. Words can come together in English only in a particular order. Say, for instance, in English, a question sentence also called an interrogative sentence, can begin either with is, are, am, was, with, one of these; or with what, when, where, which, who, why, one of these, etcetera one of these. They cannot begin a question sentence in Standard English, cannot begin with any other word. And then it is followed by; it has rigid rules about what comes after what. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 02:32)

- You must first have Noun working as subject, then verb followed by object / complement.

English is a Subject – verb – Object (S – V – O) language.

Eg. *John drives a car.*

You cannot say any of the following :

- **John a car drive*
- **A car John drives*
- **Drives John a car.*

*shows ungrammatical sentence.



In a simple sentence, in a normal ordinary sentence, you have first a noun working as a subject, then you have a verb and verb as an object. So, a lot of people say English is the subject, verb, object language; SVO language. You can only say John drives a car. In English, you cannot say it in any other manner. You cannot say 'John a car drive', or 'drives a car John drives'; 'drives John a car'. These sentences are ungrammatical in English because they do not follow the standard word order. But go to the next screen.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:34)

- In many other languages, word order is not so rigidly fixed. In Hindi or Tamil, for instance, one can say SOMETHING LIKE the following :

John a car drives.

A car John drives.

Drives John a car.



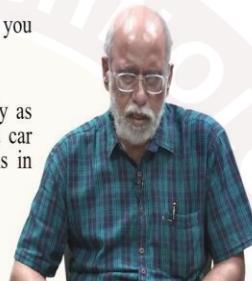
In many other languages, word order is not so rigidly fixed. In Hindi or Tamil, for instance, and in many other Asian and African languages, you can see something like this. In Hindi, you can say something of this kind, 'John a car drives'; ((Hindi me keh sakte hain. John ek car chalte

hain.)) A car John drives. ((Ek car, ek gaadi, John chalate hain.)) Drives John a car; ((Chalate hain John ek gaadi.)). It is possible for us to say similar things in Tamil but not in English. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:19)



- In, phrase, clause, sentence, at all levels, and in all kinds of sentences, word order is almost fixed in English.
- Almost any two words or more come together in English only in a certain order.
- For instance, you can only say "a car"; you cannot say *"car a".
- If you have "a red car", then again the order is fixed; you cannot put these words together in any other way.
- If it takes an adjective after itself, then it can come only as another phrase, such as in "a car of red colour", or "a car coloured red", etc. Ordinarily, adjectives precede nouns in English.



Just as in a sentence, so in a phrase, clause, and at all levels and in all kinds of sentences, interrogative, assertive, imperative, question sentences, statements sentences, sentences giving orders or making requests, etcetera etcetera. In all of these, word order is fixed. Almost any two words or more come together in English only in a certain order. For example, look at this 'a red car' or 'a car'; 'a car' is a phrase. So, you can only say 'a' before car; you cannot say 'car a', not in English.

Or a red car, you cannot say, red a car; you cannot say; car red. In French you can but not in English. In French you can say, a car red but not in English. You have to say a car red. So here also, even at the phrase level the order is fixed. So, at the level of adjective if you have more than one adjective; if you have 2-3 adjectives then which adjectives come first, which adjective comes first, that is also fixed.

Suppose you have a red car then 'a' before red, 'red' before car. If you have something else, if you want to bring red-letter then you will have to make another phrase, you will have to say 'a car' and then a prepositional phrase of red colour. Or you can say 'a car coloured red'. So, 'coloured red' is another phrase which modifies the car. So, otherwise within the phrase also it is fixed. Ordinarily, adjectives precede nouns. Ordinarily 'red' comes before the car, 'ripe' comes before mango, 'red' comes before apple. Go next.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:33)



Even among adjectives, the order is fixed.

- If you have two adjectives, "costly" and "new" before the noun "car", then you can only say "costly new car", and not "new costly car".
- If you have three or four adjectives before noun, even then the order is fixed. You generally say "costly new Maruti car" you do not say "Maruti new costly car", etc.



So, even among adjectives, the order is fixed. Suppose you have 2 or 3 adjectives, costly new, before car; now, what can you say? Can you say 'new costly car?' No. Generally speaking, in Standard English, you say 'costly new car'. If you have more than 3 or 4, for example, 'new Maruti costly car', then car is the head of the three adjectives new and costly and Maruti which comes first? Generally speaking, it is 'costly new Maruti car'; not 'Maruti new costly car'.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:26)

ACTIVITY 1



The following words have been jumbled.
Reorganize them in the acceptable order for English.

- a. my all books,
- b. teenaged only boys,
- c. rosewood old bookshelves,
- d. the selected all players



Actually, the following words have been jumbled. The principle is you go from major class to a small class, as simple as that. So, for example, look at these phrases, these jumbled phrases, and then use the same principle as I gave you now. When you are confronted with a series of

adjectives like costly, new, car, Maruti, for noun like car then what do you say first? So, costly is a larger class; new is smaller than costly, or Maruti is still smaller. So, you say costly new Maruti car. Following the same principles here, how would you say my all books, how will you reorganize it? How will you reorganize other phases?

(Refer Slide Time: 08:21)

ANSWERS



- a. All my books.
- b. only teenaged boys,
- c. old rosewood bookshelves,
- d. all the selected players



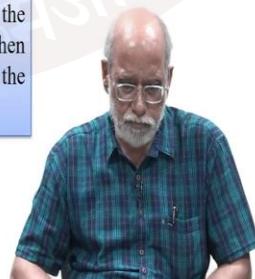
Compare your work with the answers given here. Go next.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:27)



- Word order is fixed also for noun + noun, such as “class room”, “History teacher”, “Stations Master”, “Assistant Station Master”, “Physics Laboratory”, “Boys’ Hostel”, “Night Express”, etc.

The principle is to go from modifier to the modified. So if the “history” is not of the teacher, teacher teaches history, then history modifies “teacher”. You can ask which teacher, and the answer is “history teacher”.



Word order is also fixed in a noun. If you have a noun plus noun such as classroom, can you say room class? History teacher, can you say teacher history? Yes, if you are writing the history of the teacher, then the book can be called teacher history rather than police history. Stationmaster,

if you are talking about master rather than our station; so the station master, assistant station master.

Or physics laboratory, or boys' hostel, or night express, or ladies club, Children's garden. The principle is to go from a noun phrase; the principle is to go from modifier to the modifier. And in one modifier from larger class to the smaller class generally speaking. Of course, there are exceptions. Languages are not like mathematics, so in any case about you can see your dictionary or you can consult us. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:29)

ACTIVITY 2



Words are jumbled in some of the following phrases.
Reorganize them in the acceptable order.

- a. laboratory transfer heat,
- b. spoon coffee,
- c. hockey girls team,
- d. garden children's,
- e. board school secondary education



Here, we have given you some jumbled phrase. Can you put them in order as they ought to be and compare your answer with the one given here? Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:43)

ANSWERS



- a. Heat Transfer Laboratory,
- b. Coffee spoon,
- c. Girls' Hockey Team,
- d. Children's Garden,
- e. Secondary School Education Board



If you have done it right, then you have got the insight. You now understand how word order is important in English. We will talk about word order at the sentence level, in question sentence, in the passive voice, and in imperative sentences a little later when we talk about sentence structure. Word order is very, very important there. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:13)



You can also have two nouns joined by a preposition.

For instance,

- King of England
- Captain of the team
- Gun of the soldier
- Biscuit for dog
- Car in the garage

The head of the Noun Phrase comes first. Modifiers joined by prepositions or otherwise follow.



But you can also join two nouns with a preposition. Say, for example, you can say King of England; you have a choice. You can either say England's King, where England comes first. But if you want the king to come first, then there is a preposition in between. We will have to say, King of England, captain of the team, the gun of the soldier, a biscuit for a dog, car in the garage. The head of the noun phrase comes; first, modifiers join the prepositions or otherwise follow. But if they are not joined by prepositions, then they come before. Then it will be England's King, team's captain, soldier's gun, dog's biscuit, garage's car, and does not make sense. Go on.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:17)



Word order is fixed also among verbs.

- If you have two or three words together making verbal group, such as

"John has been driving car since morning", then "has been driving" is a verbal group, where "has" comes first, followed by "been" which shows a time coming from the past, then you can bring main verb, in this case "drive", and to show that the action continues you can attach "-ing" at the end of the main verb, not at its beginning, so you have "has been driving"; you cannot say the following:

- *has been ingdrive, or
- *been drive hasing, or
- *drive beening has, etc.



So, word order is also fixed among verbs or verbal group. A verb necessarily shows you time, tense, aspect whether it is have, has, or had; then mode, is it progressive in; or routine, is goes, does goes, etc. Like that, a lot of these things are shown by the verb. Now, which of these things come first, tense or aspect or mode or something else?

John has been driving car. John has been driving since morning. In this case, John has been driving is the verbal group; has been driving, not John. Has been driving is the verbal group. Now, can we say 'been has driving?' Can we say 'been driving has him?' Can we say 'driving been in has?' No. There is a fixed order. You will have to say has been driving. Go to the next.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:32)



A common general principle is to show time of action unambiguously, so you begin with tense and end it in the present time. For example, see the following:

- a. It has been raining (since yesterday). ↴
- b. Robert has lived in Chennai (for decades).
- c. Crops have been destroyed by floods or droughts.
- d. Moral education had been given an important place in education.
- e. The train is running to time.



A common general principle is there may be exceptions, language as I said is not like mathematics. You sometimes have very glaring exceptions, but generally, nearly 80 per cent of the times, a common general principle is to show the time of action unambiguously. So, you begin with tense and end it in the present time. In between, you can have aspect, mode, and then other things. So, for example, look at this. 'It has been raining.' Even if you do not say since yesterday, it shows that it has been raining since past time.

'Robert has lived in Chennai.' Even if you do not say for decades, once you say has lived in Chennai, it means he has lived for a period of time from the past. 'Crops have been destroyed by floods or droughts.' So, once you say crops have been destroyed, it means by some agent. Since pastime, 'moral education had been given an important place in education.' Once you say had been given, it implies that you are talking about a time much in the past. Has or have it immediately past but had is long ago much in the past.

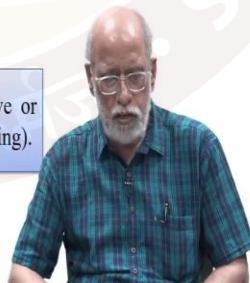
'The train is running on time.' The moment you see is or are and verb plus -ing, you know the action is in progress; action is in progress, it is not over yet. The train has not arrived at the destination, it is running through time, which means it was scheduled to arrive at Secunderabad at 10:30, it arrived at Secunderabad at 10:30. Next halt is Vijayawada; it arrives at Vijayawada at 12:30. So, it is running to time; the action is still in progress. It has not reached Delhi yet, which is the destination.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:50)



- Even without words like "since yesterday" and "for decades", we know that the speaker means to say that it has been raining since some time in the past, and that John has lived in Chennai for a period of time.
- Word order is generally fixed even in the verbal group of words.

You have tense (present/past) followed by aspect (has/have or had), voice (active/passive), and then simple/progressive (v+ing).



So, even without words like since yesterday, for decades, you understand, and that is the function that verb particles or verbal group do. This is how it is fixed. What is the principle? The principle is, you have tense, present or past first; followed by aspect, has, have; followed by a voice, active, passive; followed by mode, either progressive for with -ing or simple does, goes, etc. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:25)

ACTIVITY 3



Reorganize the sentence from the jumbled words given below:

- a. served are treats
- b. exchanged presents are
- c. houses flowers adorn
- d. be brilliantly could he It not said shone that



Answers



- 3)
- a. Treats are served.
 - b. Presents are exchanged.
 - c. Flowers adorn house.
 - d. It could not be said that he shone brilliantly.

To understand it better, do this activity. We have given you a very simple verbal group, reorganize them, unjumble them, and compare your answers with the ones given here.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:43)



- An adverb qualifies adjectives and verbs, such as in the following sentences.

Swaminathan is a very good boy. He gets up early in the morning, and begins his studies immediately.

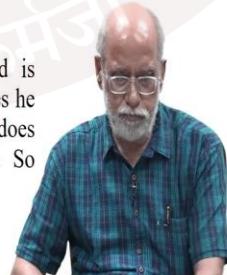


So with an adverb, so with an adjective, an adverb qualifies adjectives and verbs such as the following. Swaminathan is a very good boy. Now, 'very' is an adverb here, which qualifies good. He gets up early in the morning. So, 'early in the morning', qualifies time, when; qualifies the verb gets up. 'Begins his studies immediately'. 'Immediately' is an adverb, which qualifies the verb 'begins', begins immediately without waiting, without feeling more lazy or so. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:30)



- In the sentences above, underlined words are adverbs.
- They qualify either adjectives, as “very” before “good”.
- In the first sentence, or they qualify verbs, as “early in the morning” qualifies “gets up”, and “immediately” qualifies “begins”.
- The first adverb intensifies goodness; how good is Swaminathan? He is very good. Similarly, when does he get up? The answer is “early in the morning”. When does he begin his studies? The answer is immediately. So adverb qualifies adjectives and verbs.

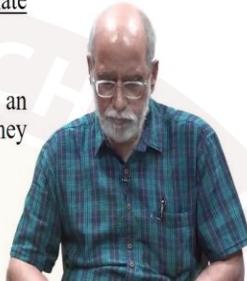


So, in a sentence above, underlined words are adverbs as explained. Go on.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:40)



- For adjectives, an adverb is an intensifier. You can, for instance, say, "Radha is very pretty." One might ask "how pretty?", the answer is "very".
- For verbs, it indicates manner, purpose and/or reason, place and many shades of time, like duration, frequency, etc. You can imagine a sentence such as follows. "The night mail from New Delhi arrived late at Secunderabad due to fog this morning."
- All the underlined words perform the work of an adverb, just as very does in the first sentence. They indicate manner, reason/purpose, place and time.



For all adjectives and adverb can be an intensifier. You can say 'Radha is very pretty'. The question is how pretty, somebody says, Radha is pretty, and somebody asks, how pretty or how much pretty? You can say, oh, very pretty. So very is an intensifier. You can say Virat Kohli is a player. Is he a good player? Of course, he is a very good player. Pele is a player; he plays football. Is he a good player? Of course, he is a good player; he is a very good player. So, 'very' here intensifies the adjective.

For verbs, adverbs work to indicate the manner of the verb, purpose of the verb; time, how often, in which period, an actual place, many shades of time like duration, frequency, etc. Imagine a sentence says as follows. The night mail from New Delhi arrived. So, 'arrived' is the verb. Late at Secundrabad. Where, when? Late. Where? Secundrabad. Why? Due to fall. When? This morning.

Once again, you know adverb performs these functions. It tells you about the verb, when, how; frequency, time, place, manner, these parts or these information about the verb, these pieces of information, these bits of information about the verb is indicated by the group of adverbs. So, for example, in this sentence, the night mail from New Delhi arrived late at Secundrabad Junction due to fog this morning.

Now, what is doing what? The main, the night mail from New Delhi arrived. So, arrived is the verb. Now, this verb is modified. First, when? It arrived late. Or how? It arrived late. Where? At Secundrabad. Why was it late? Due to fog. When? This morning. Usually, the time comes at the end, manner comes first, place and reasons come in-between usually; there may be exceptions, there may be exceptional situations.

So, all the underlying words above perform the work of an adverb just as the "very" does in the first sentence, very pretty. They indicate, here, this long adverbial phrase indicates manner,

reason or purpose, place, and time. You can do some exercise with a sentence that you might select yourself. Go next.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:59)

ACTIVITY 4



Look at the following sentences. Identify verbs/verbal group within them. Verbal group includes all those words and parts of words that indicate tense, time, aspect, etc.

- a. Patients wait outside.
- b. Doctors work inside.
- c. Patients go inside when called.
- d. Doctors hardly speak to the patients.
- e. Sometimes they speak to the patients very briefly.
- f. They are very busy, they are always short of time.
- g. Nurses answer patients' questions more elaborately.
- h. Hospitals work non-stop in India to comfort the suffering and to answer emergency without delay.



Do this activity. Look at the following sentences. Identify verbs and verbal group within them. The verbal group includes all those words and pairs of words or parts of words, that indicate tense, time, aspect, etcetera.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:20)

ACTIVITY 4



Look at the following sentences. Identify the adverb within them. Adverb includes words that indicate manner, place, purpose, time etc.

- a. Patients wait outside.
- b. Doctors work inside.
- c. Patients go inside when called.
- d. Doctors hardly speak to the patients.
- e. Sometimes they speak to the patients very briefly.
- f. They are very busy, they are always short of time.
- g. Nurses answer patients' questions more elaborately.
- h. Hospitals work non-stop in India to comfort the suffering and to answer emergency without delay.



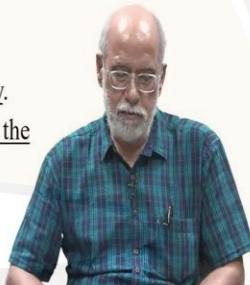
Look at the following sentences. And you can take more extracts from books or audio, a video that you may watch. We have also suggested some books. They have exercises, do those exercises but here, look at the following sentences. In each of these sentences, we have words which perform the function of an adverb, which modify the verb in some way. Now, identify the adverb and just see what function they do. Is it, is this an adverb of manner or a place or purpose, reason or of time, etc. Go to the next.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:04)

ANSWERS



- a. Patients wait outside.
- b. Doctors work inside.
- c. Patients go inside when called.
- d. Doctors hardly speak to the patients.
- e. Sometimes they speak to the patients very briefly.
- f. They are very busy, they are always short of time.
- g. Nurses answer patients' questions more elaborately.
- h. Hospitals work non-stop in India to comfort the suffering and to answer emergency without delay.



So, here answers are given for you. Next.

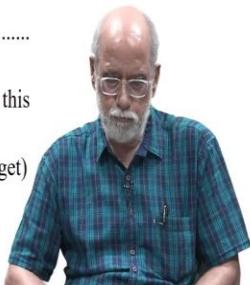
(Refer Slide Time: 21:09)

ADDITIONAL EXERCISE



Put the verb into the correct form, -ing or to. Either form is also possible:

- a. The curtain is dirty. They need (clean)
- b. Whenever I see this comedian, I can't help..... . (smile)
- c. Reena never wears sunglasses. She doesn't like sunglasses.(wear)
- d. I regret..... that we are going to have a cyclonic storm this evening. (say)
- e. Ananya has been ill but now she's beginning better. (get)



Here are some additional exercises, please.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:18)



ANSWERS

- a. cleaning
- b. smiling
- c. wearing/to wear
- d. to say
- e. to get



The clue is once again; we expect you to teach yourself by doing more exercises of this kind on your own. Take a book, listen to a radio broadcast, or watch a television clip or a film or a documentary clip and take 1 or 2 sentences out frequently. And ask yourself what is the word order here? Why is it? Is it all right? Jumble them at times and redo them. And you will find and whenever you have doubt or compare your work with a dictionary, or you can also mail us, call us. And we will also try and help you.

But the more work you do on your own, the better you will get. And that is the best way to learn and become perfect. In time, you can only teach yourself; you can also help your friends and family and can be a resource person all along. This is the way. Thank you. Thanks for your attention.