



# ENGL 157: Communication Skills I

## Lecture 2-3: Parts of Speech



## OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, the student will be able to :

1. Identify the various parts of speech in the English language
2. Explain the form, positions and functions of the various parts of speech in English sentences
3. Use these parts of speech to form correct sentences in English

# PARTS OF SPEECH

- Nine main parts of speech are going to be discussed in this lesson.
- They are: Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, Adverbs, Prepositions, Pronouns, Conjunctions, Determiners and Interjections.
- They have been categorized into **lexical items** and **non-lexical items**.

# **LEXICAL & NON-LEXICAL ITEMS**

- The lexical items are going to be discussed before the non-lexical items.
- The lexical items are those that carry semantic content. This means they have meaning in them even when they stand alone.
- They are also called open class items, meaning that, they accept new members.
- The lexical items are: Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives and Adverbs.



# LEXICAL & NON-LEXICAL ITEMS CON'T

- Each lexical item can be defined based on its **form**, its **positions** in sentences, and its **functions**.
- By form, we mean the shape that it can take, how it is built up and the changes that it can undergo.
- By position, we mean the kind of words that it occurs with in sentences.
- By function, we mean its usage or its role in a sentence.



# **NOUNS**

- Traditionally, nouns have been identified as words that name people, places or things.

## **Identification of nouns according to form/structure**

- Nouns and some suffixes: Generally these suffixes are associated with nouns and so words that end with these suffixes are identified as nouns:

-er .....teacher, preacher, player, writer

-ion.....nation, consultation, meditation

-or.....doctor, pastor, mentor, actor

-ness.....Fitness, dryness, foolishness, etc.

-hood.....womanhood, childhood, neighbourhood,  
etc.

- **Nouns and number:** Nouns can also be identified based on how they are built up according to number. Number refers to the distinction between singular and the plural.
- Most count nouns form their plural by adding ‘s’. E.g. Book-books, pen-pens, dog-dogs, etc.
- Nouns which end in ‘y’ that follow a consonant form their plural by dropping ‘y’ and adding ‘ies’. E.g. Lady-ladies, country-countries, baby-babies, pantry-pantries, etc.



- Nouns ending in ‘o’, ‘ss’, ‘sh’, ‘ch’, or ‘x’ form their plural by the addition of ‘es’. E.g. Mango-mangoes, kiss-kisses, brush-brushes, church-churches, box-boxes, etc. There are however some exceptions such as photos, pianos, etc.
- Some non-count nouns retain their form whether singular or plural. E.g. news, luggage, knowledge, etc.
- **Nouns and possession:** Nouns can also be identified based on the inflection they take to indicate possession. A noun which indicates possession shows that it is the owner of thing(s) or person(s).



- Singular nouns which end in ‘s’ or not indicate possession with an apostrophe sign and an ‘s’. For example: John’s bag, James’s bag, etc.

Plural nouns which end in ‘s’ indicate possession with the addition of only an apostrophe sign. For example: The players’ ball

Plural nouns which do not end in ‘s’ indicate possession with the addition of an apostrophe sign and an ‘s’. For example: The children’s ball

NB: Read on Types of Nouns and other ways by which certain nouns form their plurals. (Afreh 2006)



# **Identification of nouns based on their positions in sentences**

- Nouns can be identified based on their positions in sentences.
- In sentences, nouns come after determiners (a, an, the, his, hers, etc.)
- Proper nouns do not take determiners unless in certain instances where they are accompanied by dependent clauses. E.g. She is the Ama I met yesterday.



# Identification of nouns based on their functions in sentences

- There are four main functions of nouns in sentences. A noun can function as a subject, object, complement or appositive.

## A noun as a subject

- According to its position in a sentence, a noun functions as a subject when it comes before the main verb of the sentence.

E.g. **Kwame** goes to school

S            V



- Based on the meaning it conveys, a noun functions as a subject of a sentence when:

- It is the performer of an action.

E.g. **Esi** writes slowly.

- It is the possessor or recipient of an action.

E.g. **Kwasi** has a car.

- It designates places.

E.g. **Rooms** are always stuffy.

- It indicates time.

E.g. **Yesterday** was Tuesday.

- It indicates events.

E.g. **Parties** are always lovely.



- Other items can also function as the subject of a sentence. These are:
  - Noun phrases: e.g. **The woman in white** is my mother.
  - Noun clauses: e.g. **The woman that came here** is my mother.
  - Pronouns: e.g. **She** is my mother.
- 
- Grammatically, the subject of a sentence agrees in number and person with the main verb of the sentence.

**NB:** Subject-verb-agreement will be treated in detail in another lesson.

# Nouns as objects of sentences

- Based on their positions, nouns can function as objects of sentences when they occur after **action verbs**.

E.g. Kofi eats **rice**.

- Based on the meaning they convey, nouns function as objects of sentences when:
  - They are the entities that are affected by the action of the verb. E.g. The man beats **his wife**.
  - They indicate location. E.g. Kofi climbed **the mountain**.
  - They are results of the activity indicated by the verb.

E.g. Mummy prepares **rice**.



- **There are two main types of objects.** These are the direct and indirect objects.
- Both can be used in a sentence and when both are used, the indirect object is preceded by a preposition in certain kinds of sentences.

E.g. Kofi gave **the book** to **Mary**.

DO            P            IO

- In other instances, the indirect object comes before the direct object.

E.g. Kofi gave **Mary** **the book**.

IO            DO

# A NOUN AS A COMPLEMENT

- Nouns as well as other items such as noun phrases, noun clauses, adjectives or adjective phrases can function as complements in sentences.
- These items are called subject complements when they follow a copular or linking verb and describe the subject of a clause.

E.g. My father is **a farmer**.

They are also called object complements when they directly follow and modify the direct objects of sentences.

E.g. They consider their puppy **their baby**.



# A NOUN AS AN APPOSITIVE

A noun, a pronoun, a noun phrase or a noun clause set beside another noun or pronoun to rename, explain or identify it is termed as an appositive.

E.g. **Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, the President of Ghana**, is a brave man.

There are other instances where the appositive precedes the word that it renames, explains or identifies.

E.g. **The president of Ghana**, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, is a brave man.



# **VERBS**

- Traditionally, verbs have been identified as action words or doing words.

## **Identification of verbs according to form/structure and their functions**

- Verbs can also be identified based on their form or the structural changes they undergo usually to indicate tense. Tense can be said to be the shape a verb takes to indicate distinctions in time.
- There are instances where the verb does not undergo any structural change and this is referred to as the verb in its bare form. This form of the verb is used with the first person singular or plural and the third person plural as subjects of sentences.

E.g. The woman and her son / they **eat**.



- Verbs also form their simple present tense with the addition of -s, -es or -ies. This depends on the type of verb and it is used with the third person singular subjects.

e.g. Esi / she **carries** the bag.

- The simple present tense is used to express present events, habitual events, universal truths, actions simultaneous with the present moment, future time and past time.

- Regular verbs form their simple past tense with the addition of –d or –ed depending on the type of verb.
- Irregular verbs form their simple past tense by going through other structural changes. E.g. Come – came, sit – sat, run – ran, etc.
- Verbs also add –ing, -d or –ed to together with a helping indicate the aspect. this is used to show whether an action that takes place at a particular time is progressive or completed.

E.g. She **is going** to school.

she **has gone** to school.



- Verbs are used to indicate future time. It does this with the auxiliaries ‘will’ and ‘shall’ and the bare form of the verb.

E.g. She **will** go to school.

## **Identification of verbs based on their positions**

- Verbs usually come after the subject of sentences and begin the predicate of that sentence. (It happens only in active sentences which will be treated in another lesson)
- In this instance, even if an item looks like a different word class, it can still be considered a verb.

E.g. The chairman **tabled** the motion before the house.



# Identification of verbs based on their functions in sentences

Verbs can express three main functions in sentences and these are states, actions and processes

## Verbs as expressing states

Some verbs in English express the states or conditions of people or things. Such verbs include the forms of the verb *to be*(is, are, was, were, etc.), *seem*, *taste*, *appear*, *look*, etc.

Eg. He **is** a good man.

The woman **looks** beautiful.



## **Verbs as expressing actions**

Some verbs express actions and are therefore referred to as action words. Examples are *talk, eat, dance, jump,* etc.

E.g. She **sweeps** the compound everyday.

## **Verbs as expressing processes**

Some verbs express processes. These are series of changes, especially the ones that happen naturally or unconsciously. Examples are *grow* and *digest*

E.g. Babies **grow**

NB: Read on other types of verbs



# ADJECTIVES

- Traditionally, they are identified as words that describe a noun or a pronoun in a sentence.

## Identification based on form

- Many adjectives can be identified by their suffixes.  
Some adjective forming suffixes are:

-ic – romantic

-ful – faithful

-al – logical

-ous – famous

-ive – attractive



Many adjectives use the suffix –er and –est to mark comparative and superlative degrees, respectively.

The comparative is used when two items are being compared. E.g. Esi is **bigger** than Ama.

The superlative is used when three or more items are being compared. E.g. Esi is the **biggest** of them all.

# Identification based on position to indicate function

- Based on position, adjectives can occur attributively. This means that they can appear inside a noun phrase and modify that noun phrase.

E.g. A **hardworking** player was on their team.

- Adjectives can also occur predicatively. This means they can appear outside the noun phrase that they modify. Here, they usually follow a linking verb.

E.g. He is **hardworking**.



# ADVERBS

- Traditionally, adverbs have been defined as words that modify verbs, adjectives or other adverbs and answer the questions how, where, why or when an action takes place.

## Identification based on form

- Just like adjectives, some adverbs also use the suffixes –er and –est to indicate comparative and superlative degrees respectively.

E.g. He is **faster** than you.

He is the **fastest** of them all.

- Some adverbs are also identified with the suffix –ly.



- In terms of their positions in sentences, adverbs have the property of mobility and can therefore begin the sentence, end the sentence or in some instances, come immediately after the subject of the sentence as indicated in the examples below.

E.g. **Usually**, we go on holidays.

We go on holidays **usually**.

We **usually** go on holidays.

However, when adverbs are not properly placed, they can cause ambiguity. When it happens like that, it is advisable to place the adverb next to the headword it is intended to modify.

# **IDENTIFICATION BASED ON FUNCTION**

It must be indicated that adverb phrases can also perform all these functions. Again, these functions that adverbs perform are what lead to the types of adverbs.

1. Adverbs are used to indicate time.

E.g. The alarm went off **yesterday**.



2. They are used to indicate manner.

E.g. Present your case **carefully**.

3. They are used to indicate place

E.g. **Here**, the situation is different.

4. They are used to indicate frequency.

E.g. She comes here **often**.

5. They are used to indicate reason.

E.g. As it's **Friday**, you can stay up another hour.

6. They are used to indicate degree.

E.g. She is not **as poor as** she could have been.

- Now, let us turn our attention to **the non-lexical items**

The non-lexical items do not carry semantic content.

This

means that, they do not make meaning on their own.

They get their meaning mainly from the lexical words in context.

They are also called closed class items, meaning that they do not accept new members.

The non-lexical items are: prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, determiners and interjections.

# **Form of Closed word Classes**

NB: It must be noted that the closed word classes do not have a specific form. This means there are no specific suffixes or affixes that can be used to identify them.

# PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions are words that link nouns, pronouns and phrases to other words in a sentence.

A word or phrase that a preposition introduces is called the object of the preposition.

For example in the sentence, “The book is leaning on the table”, “**the table**” is the object of the preposition “**on**”.



# THE POSITIONS OF PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions normally precede their objects.

Sometimes, the preposition is separated from its complement as in:

The man whom we gave the book to – *instead of*  
The man to whom we gave the book.

NB: The word complement is being used here in a literal sense to refer to whatever completes or comes after the preposition.



Prepositional phrases tend to be built the same: a preposition followed by a complement.

This is usually referred to as the object of the preposition.

The complement may be a pronoun, noun phrase or a gerund (a verb in its –ing form).

Some examples are:

I bought a bag for him (prep + pronoun).

The cat is under the table (prep + noun phrase).



# FUNCTIONS OF SOME PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions fall into different types. These types have different uses in phrases or clauses.

Some of the types and their uses are presented in the following slides.

# Prepositions of Time: At, On, and In

We use **at** to designate specific times.

E.g. The will leave at 4:00am tomorrow.

We use **on** to designate days and dates.

E.g. My father is coming on Monday.

We use **in** for non-specific times during the day, month, season, or year.

E.g. He started the job **in** 1982.



# Prepositions of Place: At, On, and In

We use **at** for specific addresses.

E.g. The ceremony will be held at Bomso L/A Primary.

We use **on** to designate names of streets, avenues, etc.

E.g. Her house is on Ridge Road.

We use **in** for the names of land-areas (towns, countries, states, and continents).

E.g. She lives in Kumasi.



# **Prepositions of Movement: to and No Preposition**

We use **to** in order to express movement towards a place.

E.g. They were walking to school together.

**Toward** and **towards** are also helpful prepositions to express movement.

# PRONOUNS

Pronouns are anaphoric elements used to replace nouns.

E.g. The lady opened the refrigerator.

She opened it. (The pronoun **she** replaces ‘the lady’, and the pronoun **it** replaces ‘the refrigerator’)

## Position of Pronouns

Pronouns can occur as subjects or as objects.

- Example of a pronoun as a subject:

**She** is happy

- Example of a pronoun as an object

Kofi gave the book to **me**.

# **Functions of Pronouns**

They are used to identify nouns, they show possession, they designate places, etc. It must be noted that there are many other functions of pronouns which are all linked to the types of pronouns. The types of pronouns have therefore been discussed below.

## **Types of Pronouns**

Pronouns have been grouped into several types. These are: personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, relative pronouns, interrogative pronoun, indefinite pronouns , reflexive pronouns and intensive pronouns.



# **Personal Pronouns**

Personal pronouns refer to specific people or things and change their forms to indicate person, number, gender, and case.

## **Person**

English indicates three types of persons – first person, second person and third person.

“I” and “We” are the first person pronouns in English. “I” is the singular first person pronoun and “They” is the plural first person pronoun.

E. g. I am happy.



“You” is the second person pronoun in English. It can either be used as singular or plural.

E.g. You are my friend.

“He”, “She”, “It” and “They” are the third person pronouns in English.

“He”, “She” and “It” are the singular third person pronouns in English whilst “They” is the plural third person pronoun in English.

E.g. She is a lecturer.

They were writing.



# Demonstrative Pronouns

A demonstrative pronoun points to, and identifies a noun or a pronoun.

The demonstrative pronouns are this, that, these and those.

Examples are:

This tastes good.

That phone is mine.

Those are my friends.

These cakes are delicious.



# Interrogative Pronouns

The interrogative pronouns introduce questions.

The interrogative pronouns are the wh-words. These are: what, which, who, whom, when and whose.

Whereas “who” and “whom” are used to refer to people, “which” and “what” are used to refer to things or to animals.



Examples of interrogative pronouns used in sentences:

What did he say to you?

Who asked the question?

What is that?

Who will buy me a pen?

Which do you prefer?

## Reading Assignment

Read on relative pronouns, indefinite pronouns, reflexive pronouns and intensive pronouns.



# DETERMINERS

Determiners “are those little words that precede and modify nouns.” (Afreh 2006: 149).

Examples are: the, a, that, a bit of, etc.

## Position

Determiners precede nouns and noun phrases.

As a result of the position they take in a noun phrase, determiners are said to mark nouns. That is, determiners are always followed by nouns.



# Functions of Determiners

1. They specify nouns

E.g. The cat is mine.

2. They show possession.

E.g. That was her.

3. They show quantity.

How many books are they?



# CONJUNCTIONS

Conjunctions are words that are used to join similar grammatical units like words and words, clauses and clauses or phrases and phrases.

Some examples of conjunctions are *but, or, while, before, or, yet, and, so* .



# Functions

1. Conjunctions are used to join words, phrases and clauses.

Examples of such conjunctions are *but, and, or, so, yet and, for*

Examples:

The boy **and** the girl.( phrase and noun )

The girl is good **but** the boy is naughty. (clause and clause)

2. Conjunctions show contrast between two grammatical units.

Examples of such conjunctions are *but and yet*

3. Conjunctions are used to indicate subordination in clauses.

Examples of such conjunctions include *because*, *while*, *if* and *since*.



# INTERJECTIONS

Interjections are words used to express strong emotions or excitement.

An interjection can be just one word or a group of words.

Because they express strong emotions, they are identified in sentences with exclamations.

Examples of interjections include *ouch!*, *hey!*, *shhh!*

## Position

Like adverbs, interjections are very mobile.  
Their positions in sentences can change.



# Functions

They are used to demand or request something, usually in a forceful manner.

They are used to express emotions like disgust.

They are used in greetings  
tings. E.g. Hello!

They mark hesitation. E.g. Errm!

They express surprise. E.g. Wow!



- The actual part of speech of a word is realised when that word is in context. Therefore, for example, for a word to be identified as a verb in a sentence, it has to take the form that a verb should take, it has to take the position that a verb should take. It has to also function as a verb. This explains why we can have a sentence like:

They chair the occasion.



# Assignment

**Identify the parts of speech of “up” in the following sentences**

1. He looked **up** and saw the stars.
2. The time is **up**.
3. The list is full of some **ups** and downs.
4. He has just been **upped** to the position of a president.

