2 Word classes – nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs

In this unit you will:

- identify the four main word classes from context
- expand your vocabulary
- develop your reading skills at sentence level

Introduction

Knowing the word class for an individual word will help you use it correctly in both writing and speaking. The main classes we will look at in this unit are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

> Educators have a multitude of explanations for why smaller class sizes might be expected to improve academic performance, although frequently the ideas are anecdotal.

Source: Ehrenberg, R. G., Brewer, D. J., Gamoran, A., & Willms, J. D. (2001, November). Does class size matter? *Scientific American*, *285*(5), 78–85.

Here are some examples of word classes from the text above:

Nouns	educators, multitude, explanations, class, sizes, performance
Verbs	have, might, expect, improve, are
Adjectives	smaller, academic, anecdotal
Adverbs	frequently

Note: Sometimes you can only identify word class from context.

Example:

- *He <u>studies</u> hard for his exams. (v)*
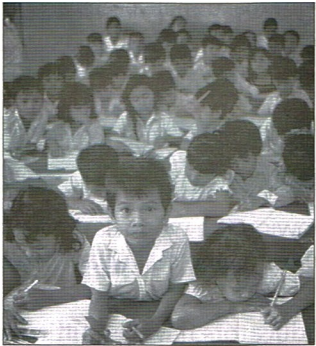- *They work hard in their <u>studies</u>. (n)*

1.1 **Read the text and complete the table below. Put the underlined words in the correct column according to their word class.**

Study after study ranks schoolchildren in Japan and other developed Asian countries among the best in the world, particularly on standardized tests of Mathematics and Science. American high school students, meanwhile, have slipped somewhere below those in Greece, Lithuania, Taiwan and Singapore in advanced Mathematics and Science. However, classes in Asia are large; forty students for one teacher would be normal in most of the region. In contrast, elementary school class sizes in the United States average about 24, according to the US Department of Education.

Source: Zorpette, G. (2001, November). The Asian Paradox [Sidebar]. *Scientific American, 285*(5), 84.

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs

2.1 **Use your dictionary to check these words and write which word class they belong to.**

Word	Word class	Word	Word class
growth	noun	regular	
entire		relatively	
basically		provide	
avoid		prevent	
existence		highly	
discover		security	

Note: The following common patterns will help in identifying word class. Words ending in:

- ~th, ~ence, ~ity are usually nouns
- ~ly are usually adverbs

2.2 **Decide what word class would fill each gap in these sentences. Write *v* (verb), *n* (noun), *adj* (adjective) or *adv* (adverb) in the brackets after each gap.**

1. Researchers have _____ (_v_) that some computer users are spending up to 15 hours a day at their machines.

2. E-commerce is a _____ (__) recent phenomenon.

3. A virus could potentially destroy the _____ (__) database.

4. Online _____ (__) is becoming an increasing problem in e-commerce.

5. We've seen an enormous _____ (__) in the number of businesses that operate solely through the Internet.

6. The installation of anti-spam software can _____ (__) unwanted e-mails reaching your computer.

7. The new network system is _____ (__) sound.

8. There are simple measures that can be taken to _____ (__) becoming a victim of computer fraud.

9. The _____ (__) of organized criminal gangs targeting the Internet is not in doubt.

10. Criminals have developed _____ (__) sophisticated techniques to bypass computer security systems.

11. Most experts recommend _____ (__) security checks.

12. All universities should _____ (__) more computer facilities for students.

2.3 **Complete the sentences in Ex 2.2 with words from Ex 2.1. In the case of verbs, pay attention to the ending required, e.g., ~s, ~ed, ~ing, etc.**

Example: Researchers have *discovered* (*v*) that some computer users are spending up to 15 hours a day at their machines.

| Task 3 | Words belonging to two or more classes |

We noted in Task 1 that some words can belong to more than one word class.

Example:

The word *average* can be a noun, a verb or an adjective.

- *In the years between 1982 and 1988, the economy grew at an **average** of nearly 3 per cent per year. (n)*
- *Inflation **averaged** just under 2.8 per cent per year. (v)*
- *The **average** cost of making a movie has risen by 15 per cent. (adj)*

3.1 **Use a dictionary to check the different word classes these words belong to.**

Word	Word class	Word	Word class
excess	noun, adjective	spare	
stem		joint	
match		risk	
influence		sample	
lack		rank	

3.2 **The words from the table in Ex 3.1 appear in the following sentences. Write *n, v, adj* or *adv* to show which word class they belong to.**

1. A decline in soft drinks sales has left the industry with <u>spare</u> capacity. (adj)

2. Many factories saw <u>excess</u> production during the first six months of the year. (⎯)

3. However, <u>lack</u> of investment has been the major problem for many companies in the drinks sector. (⎯)

4. Britvic's performance has not <u>matched</u> that of its competitors. (⎯)

5. Pepsi-Cola <u>ranks</u> as one of the world's biggest manufacturers. (⎯)

6. Many companies have entered into <u>joint</u> venture agreements with Eastern European companies. (⎯)

7. Drinks are regularly <u>sampled</u> to check their quality. (⎯)

8. Many of the drinks industry's current problems <u>stem</u> from the bad weather in the peak sales season. (⎯)

9. External factors have a strong <u>influence</u> on sales in the drinks industry. (⎯)

10. The board took a calculated <u>risk</u> to appoint a man without management experience to such a senior post. (⎯)

3.3 **Here is further practice on word classes, similar to the work you did in Ex 3.1. Use your dictionary to check the different word classes these words belong to.**

Word	Word class	Word	Word class
net	noun, verb, adjective	support	
experience		ideal	
rates		border	
double		prompt	
essential		blame	

3.4 Here is further practice on word classes, similar to the work you did in Ex 3.2. Which word class do the words in these sentences belong to?

1. The Hilton's chief executive told bankers that the March 31st accounts would show <u>net</u> assets had risen to £635 million, compared with £385 million previously. (_adj_)

2. In the past five years, the company has <u>experienced</u> a sharp upturn in sales. (___)

3. The group <u>rates</u> very highly in all surveys of luxury hotels worldwide. (___)

4. The number of business clients has nearly <u>doubled</u> over the past five years. (___)

5. Easy access to the airport is regarded as <u>essential</u> by most business clients. (___)

6. We <u>support</u> the idea of building hotels in downtown business centres. (___)

7. The hotel is situated in an <u>ideal</u> location, which is convenient both for the airport and the nearby business centre. (___)

8. Furthermore, it is only a few miles from the <u>border</u>, making it a suitable venue for clients intending to travel by car to other countries in the region. (___)

9. Staff will always deal <u>promptly</u> with any complaints. (___)

10. The fall in business last year was <u>blamed</u> on the strike by air traffic controllers. (___)

Task 4	**Review**

4.1 Complete these exercises about word class.

1. Which word classes do these words belong to?

   a. advanced, elementary, entire, normal, academic   _____

   b. develop, prevent, avoid, provide, spend   _____

   c. size, performance, explanation, security, existence   _____

   d. frequently, particularly, basically, highly   _____

2. Which two word classes can these words belong to?

   a. influence   ___ and ___

   b. match   ___ and ___

   c. joint   ___ and ___

   d. lack   ___ and ___