

# READINGS IN BASIC ENGLISH *for* Higher Education

Edited by:  
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# ***Chapter Five***

## **GRAMMAR**

*By Anthony E. Ogu*

### **5.1 GRAMMAR: AN OVERVIEW**

One of the meanings of the word “grammar” is the rules guiding the formation of sentences in a language. An example of such rules is the one that tells us that when a countable noun, such as “book”, appears in a situation where it is plural (ie. more than one) we add ‘s’ and it becomes ‘books’. These grammatical rules are not like ethical rules that are prescriptive and legislative. Nobody instituted them. They are mere observations of how language works. A native speaker of a language naturally acquires these rules governing the use of his language. These rules are part of the intuitive knowledge he has about his language, which we call his linguistic competence.

For a second language speaker, such as the typical Nigerian speaker of the English language, the circumstances under which the language is learned makes it difficult for him to master these rules governing the formation of sentences. His exposure to the language is not total as in a first language acquisition. His inadequate knowledge of the second language makes him adopt strategies that sometimes give rise to wrong sentences. Therefore, the teaching of grammar is





essential in a second language situation. This is contrary to the belief of some linguists who do not approve of direct teaching of grammar. But experience has shown that the output of the average second language speaker of a language improves with a deliberate and sustained effort to learn the rules governing the use of language. It is for this reason that it is necessary to continue to teach English grammar in the Nigerian institutions of learning, even as general English courses to students of higher learning whose areas of specialization are not English. Grammar lessons help to teach them the right use of language and improve their communication.

In this chapter, we are going to adopt a literary approach in our discussion for the interest of those who are not students of linguistics.

## **5.2 PARTS OF SPEECH**

The first place to begin to learn how sentences are formed is to learn the categorization of words of the language. All the words of a language can be grouped into what is called parts of speech. The basis for this grouping is the function of these words in sentences. The learner should note that words classified as belonging to a particular part of speech (for example nouns) behave in the same way and occupy the same positions in sentences. In the English language, all the words are grouped into eight parts of speech. Here is a list of the eight parts of speech with examples of words belonging to each.

Noun	-	Owerri, Emeka, market, ball, humility
Pronoun	-	I, he, she, they, anybody
Adjective	-	new, old, sad, brown, the
Verb	-	sing, go, write, is, have
Adverb	-	fast, quickly, very, too, today
Preposition	-	about, in, on, under, through
Conjunction	-	and, but, because, although, or
Interjection	-	oh! wow! alas!

## NOUN

Traditional grammar defines a noun as the name of a person, place, thing, state, activity or quality. Examples of these are:

person	-	Peter, man
place	-	<i>Owerri, market</i>
thing	-	ball, pen, breeze
state	-	happiness
activity	-	dance, game
quality	-	humility, kindness, courage

There are also certain characteristics of nouns that help us in identifying nouns where they appear in sentences:

- (a) Nouns are usually proceeded by words** like a, an, the, any, some, each, several, his, her, their, my, this, these, that, those etc. These are called determiners because they signal that a noun is coming after them.

**(b) Nouns have specific positions they occur in sentences.**

- (i) as subject of a sentence e.g. *John is a boy*
- (ii) as direct object of a verb e.g. *The man killed a goat.*
- (iii) as indirect object of a verb e.g. *He gave the man a book*
- (iv) as subject complement e.g. *Emeka is a trader.*
- (v) as object complement e.g. *The class appointed Uche a prefect.*
- (vi) as object of a preposition e.g. *The book is on the table.* (object of preposition "on")
- (vii) in apposition to a noun e.g. *Mr Obi, our teacher, is kind.* ('Teacher' is in apposition to the noun Mr Obi).
- (viii) as adjective e.g. *The school ball* (school qualifies ball).

**(c) Nouns have peculiar forms.**

Base form	plural form	possessive singular	possessive plural
boy	boys	boy's	boys'
man	men	man's	men's
sheep	sheep	sheep's	sheep's

**TYPES OF NOUNS**

Nouns have been classified into the following:

- a) Proper Nouns:** These are names of particular persons, places or things.

- person — Ogechi, Ekaette, Musa.
- place — Nigeria, Imo State, Federal University of Technology, Owerri.
- thing — River Niger, Mount Everest,

Proper nouns are written with a capital letter at the beginning of it. Proper nouns do not usually take articles and other determiners except in some circumstances, for example, *the River Niger; the Federal University of Technology, Owerri; The Musa I am talking about is not as tall as this.*

- b) **Common Nouns:** Common nouns are names given to things that share similar attributes. For example, the word 'boy' is used to refer to every young male. It does not matter if there are other distinguishing qualities each particular boy has. Common nouns are generic names. Examples of common nouns are boy, tree, school, university, book etc. We do not begin common nouns with capital letters except when they begin sentences or form a part of a proper noun like in *the Federal University of Technology, Owerri.*
- c) **Collective Nouns:** A collective noun is the name given to a group of persons or things regarded as a unit. Examples of collective nouns include: team, choir, audience, herd, class, congregation, swarm, etc. The collective noun usually takes the singular form of the verb, e.g., *The audience is quite large.* However, when



we are considering the individual persons or things as distinct entities we use the plural verb, e.g., *The audience are pushing one another.*

- d) Abstract Nouns:** Abstract nouns are notions, ideas, qualities which cannot be physically seen, felt, touched, heard, smelt and so on. Examples of this include courage, beauty, strength, fear, love, humility
- e) Countable and Uncountable Nouns:** We can divide all the nouns into countable and uncountable nouns. Countable nouns refer to things we can count, for example, a book, two books, many books etc. Countable nouns cannot occur in the singular without a determiner. That is why it is wrong to say: "I saw book" instead of "I saw a book" or "I saw the book" etc. (see the section on adjective for more examples of determiners). A countable noun when more than one becomes plural.

one boy	-	two boys
one man	-	three men

Uncountable nouns refer to mass nouns or materials that cannot be easily isolated into single units. Uncountable nouns include oil, sand, water, stone, paper, glass etc. Since uncountable nouns are uncountable we cannot use them in the plural form. That is why we cannot say *furnitures*, *equipments* etc. However, we can only count them in measures

e.g. *a cup of water.*

Some nouns can be countable in one sense and uncountable in another sense. Examples are:

- 1(a) The house is made of stone. (uncountable)
- (b) The children threw stones at the thief (countable)
- 2(a) The high cost of paper is now a problem to publishers. (uncountable)
- (b) I bought a paper at the news-stand and read about the scandal.(countable)

Uncountable nouns take such determiners as much, little, a little, some. On the other hand, countable nouns take the following determiners: many, few, a few, several, another, each, etc.

## FORMATION OF PLURALS OF NOUNS

The majority of countable nouns in English form their plural by adding -s or -es, e.g. book – books, church – churches etc. However, for the other irregular nouns here are some of the guidelines for forming the plurals of these nouns.

- 1. For nouns that end in 'sh', 'ch', 'x' and 's' add 's' or 'es'

<b>Singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
wish	wishes
torch	torches
box	boxes
bus	buses

2. For some nouns that end in 'o' add 'es' examples

<b>Singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
cargo	cargoes
mango	mangoes
mosquito	mosquitoes

Some nouns that end in 'o' add only 's' e.g piano-pianos, biro-biros.

3. If a noun ends in 'f' or 'fe', change the 'f' or 'fe' to 'ves'

<b>Singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
wife	wives
leaf	leaves
knife	knives

There are a few exceptions where you just add 's' e.g roof-roofs, chief-chiefs, safe-safes.

4. For some nouns that end in 'y', change 'y' to 'ies'.

<b>Singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
body	bodies
baby	babies
city	cities

You change the 'y' only when it comes after consonants. If it comes after a vowel you do not change it. Examples: monkey-monkeys, key-keys, valley-valleys

5. Some nouns do not have any predictable way of changing to plural. You just learn their plural forms. Some

do not even change at all in the plural.

**Singular**

woman

man

foot

ox

tooth

thesis

crisis

sheep

deer

swine

analysis

**plural**

women

men

feet

oxen

teeth

theses

crises

sheep

deer

swine

analyses

6. Some have two plural forms.

**singular**

medium

memorandum

symposium

stadium

formula

**plural**

media

memoranda

symposia

stadia

formulae

**plural**

mediums

memorandums

symposiums

stadiums

formulas

**EXERCISES**

1. Pick out the nouns in this short passage.

**PASSAGE**

Since the Supreme Court nullified the election of Celestine Omehia as governor of Rivers State, many top lawyers have described the judgment as an error. Chief



Gani Fawehinmi, for instance, says it is a "judicial imposition" because a politician who never contested the governorship, in this case, Rotimi Amechi, was declared a beneficiary of the governorship election. Other lawyers suggested that instead of ordering Amechi to be sworn in as governor, the court should have ordered a fresh election.

*(The Nation newspaper of Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2007)*

2. Write out the grammatical function of each of the nouns you picked out.

## VERB

The verb is a word that expresses the action performed by persons or things in a sentence. Examples

*The boy has written three letters today.*

*The ball rolled out of the field.*

*I eat rice a lot.*

*Our dog barks often at night.*

The verb sometimes merely expresses a state of being.

*He is a boy.*

*He became the leader of the group.*

## Forms of a verb

The verb has the following forms:

1. The base (present infinitive)  
Examples: call, drink, put, break
2. The –s form (used for third person singular)

Examples: calls, drinks, puts, breaks  
e.g. He calls me always.

3. The -ing form (present participle)

Examples: calling, drinking, putting, breaking.

Note that some verbs such as 'put' double the last letter before adding -ing.

4. The -ed form (past tense)

examples: called, drank, put, broke

The commonest way of forming the past tense is by adding -ed. However, some irregular verbs such as 'drink' and 'break' have their peculiar past tense forms. Some, such as 'put', do not change at all.

5. The -en form (past participle)

Examples: called, drunk, put, broken

The regular verbs such as 'call' add -ed to form the past participle. The irregular verbs have their special forms for the past participle which the learner must learn. Examples: drunk, broken, put, etc.

A good dictionary gives the past tense (pt) and past participle (pp) of the verbs in its entries. It may also give a list of the infinitive, past tense and past participle of the irregular verbs in the appendices pages. (see *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

## CLASSIFICATION OF VERBS

Verbs can be classified into finite and non-finite forms

### 1. FINITE FORMS OF VERBS:

The finite verb is the principal verb of a sentence or

a clause. It can serve as the only verb of a sentence. Finite verbs are subdivided into lexical (or main verbs) and auxiliary verbs.

(A) **LEXICAL OR MAIN VERBS:**

The lexical verb is the verb that carries meaning in a sentence. The auxiliary verb does not carry meaning. e.g. She can write.

'Write' is the lexical verb and it carries the meaning. On the other hand, 'can' is the auxiliary and it does not carry the meaning.

Lexical verbs can be transitive or intransitive. Some others can be transitive in one sense and intransitive in another.

**TRANSITIVE VERBS:** A transitive verb is a verb that requires an object to complete its meaning. Transitive verbs can usually be changed from the active to the passive voice.

e.g. The man killed a goat (direct object is 'goat') (Active voice).

A goat was killed by the man (passive voice).

**INTRANSITIVE VERBS:** This is a verb which does not require an object to complete its meaning. The action or the state of the verb remains with the verb, and does not affect any other person or thing e.g.

She has been waiting patiently for hours.

I was sick last Christmas.

*He swims well. Birds fly.*

**TRANSITIVE CUM INTRANSITIVE:** These are verbs that can be either transitive or intransitive depending on the grammatical context in which they appear, e.g.

(a) He broke the pot. (transitive)

(b) The pot broke in two. (intransitive)

(a) I feel a pain in the leg. (transitive)

(b) I feel all right. (intransitive)

(a) She is singing the new song (transitive).

(b) She sings well (intransitive).

**(B) AUXILIARY VERBS:** The auxiliary verb is used with the main verb in a verb phrase. An auxiliary verb regularly indicates tense but may also indicate voice (active or passive), mood (indicative, imperative or subjunctive), person (first, second or third), and number (singular or plural).

*We are eating* ('are' indicates present tense, active voice, indicative mood, first person, plural number).

*He has eaten* ('has' indicates present tense, active voice, indicative mood, third person, singular number).

*The food was eaten* ('was' indicates past tense, passive voice, indicative mood, third person, singular number).

There are two kinds of auxiliaries: primary and modal auxiliaries.

**(i) PRIMARY AUXILIARIES:** These are 'have', 'be' and



'do'. These primary auxiliary verbs take the -s form for 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular (i.e. when they appear in the third person they take -s) e.g. He doesn't eat rice.

They can also be used as lexical verbs standing alone in sentences e.g. She is here (third person singular)

She does her work well (third person singular)

She has my book (third person singular).

In the three sentences above these verbs have been used as lexical verbs. These can be compared with the ones below where they are used as auxiliaries.

She is doing her work

She does not do her work

She has read the book.

**(ii) MODAL AUXILIARIES:** The modal auxiliaries are used in combination with other verbs to express how the speaker/writer feels about what he is saying or writing. They express attitude. Modal auxiliaries express whether what the speaker is saying/writing is certain, probable or possible, whether it is real or unreal, or whether it is something likely or unlikely to be realized. For example, if someone says "I may come to school tomorrow", it means that he is not certain that he will come to school tomorrow. What expresses this uncertainty is the modal auxiliary "may".

The modal auxiliaries are shall, should, will, would, can, could, may, might, dare, must, ought to, need, used to. These do not take such inflectional endings as -s, -

ing, or -ed/en.

(See a good dictionary for the meanings of these modal auxiliary verbs)

## **(2) THE NON-FINITE FORM OF VERBS:**

A non-finite verb is a verbal functioning as noun, an adjective, or an adverb. A non-finite verb cannot stand as the only verb in a sentence. The non-finite verbs are the infinitive, the present and past participles, and the gerund.

### **(a) THE INFINITIVE**

The infinitive is of two types: the full infinitive marked by 'to' (e.g. to go), and the bare infinitive (e.g. go)

#### **(i) The Full Infinitive;**

Examples: I want to go

This will enable me to do it in time

He comes to see you.

#### **(ii) Bare Infinitives**

Examples: I heard Uche say that

Let him go away

You dare not do it.

I could not see you.

## **THE USES OF THE INFINITIVE:**

### **(i) Nominal use, e.g.**

(a) To study is difficult (as subject of a sentence)

(b) They want to go. (as object of a verb)

### **(ii) Predicative use e.g.**

Their work was to sweep the compound  
(complement of verb 'was').

(iii) Adjectival use e.g.

James is the man to watch. (qualifies the noun  
'man').

(iv) Adverbial use e.g.

The infinitives are used together with their objects  
as adverbs of purpose, reason or result:

*I went there to see him (adverb of purpose)*

*He went away to avoid seeing us (adverb of reason)*

*He is too daft to understand anything (adverb of result)*

(v) Prepositional use:

The teacher was just about to go when the inspector  
arrived (in a phrase with the preposition 'about').

## B. PARTICIPLES

The participle is a non-finite form of the verb which  
is usually used in a phrase with the auxilliary verb to form  
a finite verb of a sentence. It is also used as adjective  
sometimes.

There are two participles: the present participle and  
the past participle.

**Present Participle:** The present participle ends in -ing.  
The present participle has the following uses.

1. As part of a verb phrase: The present participle,  
with the various parts of the verb 'to be' (i.e. is, am, are,  
was, were, be, been, being) forms the continuous tenses,  
e.g.

We are learning English.  
He has been writing letters.

2. Adjectival use: The present participles, even though they are partly verbs, are also partly adjectives and can function as noun qualifiers, e.g.

an interesting book

The book is interesting.

a crying baby

**Past participles:** The past participle ends in -ed in the case of regular verbs, but for the irregular verbs there is a lot of variations. (See a good grammar book or dictionary for the list of verbs and their forms).

Uses of the past participle:

1. To form the perfect tense;

It combines with parts of the verb 'to have' (have, has, had) to form the perfect tense; e.g.

He has written the assignment.

We had slept before she arrived.

2. To form the passive voice, e.g.

The glass was broken by Obi.

The room has been swept.

3. Adjectival uses, e.g.

The broken flask was replaced.

Painted houses look beautiful.



### C. GERUNDS (VERBAL NOUNS):

The gerund is the form of a verb which ends in -ing and which is used as a noun. It has the same form as the present participle.

However, the two can be distinguishable because whereas the participle is a verbal adjective, (i.e. doing the function of adjectives), the gerund is a verbal noun (doing the function of a noun).

Fighting is bad (gerund, subject of sentence)

The Fighting cocks were chased away (participle, modifies the noun 'cocks').

#### The gerund used as noun:

1. Subject of a sentence, e.g.  
Reading is a good hobby.
2. The complement of a verb, e.g.  
*What Nneka likes most is sleeping.*
3. The object of a verb, e.g. *He has stopped singing.*
4. The object of a preposition, e.g. *I don't like the idea of waiting (object of preposition 'of').*
5. In apposition to a noun, e.g. *His hobby, dancing, irritates his parents* (in apposition to the noun 'hobby').

Verbal characteristics of the gerund:

1. It can take a direct object, e.g.  
*He has stopped singing the song.* ('the song' is the object of the gerund 'singing')
2. It can be modified by an adverb, e.g.  
*Fighting always is bad.* ('always' modifies the gerund

'fighting')

*Eating well keeps you healthy.* ('well' modifies the gerund 'eating')

## TENSE:

Tense is the form verbs take to indicate time. We have time present, time past and time future. In English, verbs have only two forms to indicate time. For example, the verb 'ask' has the form 'ask' for present time and 'asked' for past time. There is no specific form to show future time, unlike in some other languages, such as French, which have different forms for the three tenses.

	Present time	Past time	Future time
FRENCH	J'aime	J'aimai	J'aimerai
ENGLISH	I love	I loved	I shall love

To form the future tense in English, the auxiliary 'shall' or 'will' is combined with the infinitive e.g. shall love. Also such expressions as 'next', 'tomorrow' 'going to' are used to show futurity, e.g. 'I am going to see you tomorrow'. Because of this absence of a special inflection (form) of the verb to show future time, modern linguists maintain that English has two tenses. In Traditional Grammar, however, English is said to have three major tenses called the simple tenses: simple present tense, simple past tense and simple future tense. In addition to these, there are other sub-tenses. These sub-tenses are what the modern linguists regard as aspect. We have perfective aspect which corresponds with Traditional

Grammar perfect tenses. There is the progressive aspect which corresponds with the continuous tenses.

However, what we shall study here is the Traditional Grammar model which runs thus:-

### **SIMPLE TENSES:**

#### **Simple Present Tense:**

The Simple Present Tense is used to indicate a habitual action (something we do all the time although we may not be necessarily doing it now). It is also used to express a general statement about something that remains true all the time.

I always ask questions.

He takes good care of his family.

Nigeria produces oil.

We depend on water to live.

The third person singular (he/she/it/Nigeria, etc.) takes the -s form of the verb when the sentence is in the Simple Present Tense, e.g. 'takes,' and 'produces.'

#### **Simple Past Tense:**

The Simple Past Tense indicates an action in the past, e.g

I asked a question in the class yesterday.

You embarrassed the teacher this morning.

He took good care of his mother.

The children ate all the food I kept for you.

To form the past tense of regular verbs, we add -ed

to the base of the word, e.g. ask + -ed (asked). The irregular verbs have their peculiar ways of forming their past tense, e.g. take—took

**Simple Future Tense:** The Simple Future Tense indicates an action in the future, e.g.

I shall see you tomorrow.

You will go with me to see the president.

He will assist us greatly.

We shall travel abroad next year.

They will miss us terribly.

To form this tense, we use 'shall' for the first person pronouns (*I, we*) and use 'will' for the second and third persons (*you, he, she, it, they*). However, in informal spoken language 'will' is used with the first person, e.g. *I will see you in a while* (or the contracted form: *I'll see you in a while*). Nowadays, the use of 'shall' in forming the Future Tense sounds outdated and stilted.

## PERFECT TENSES:

**Present Perfect Tense:** The Present Perfect Tense indicates an action that has been concluded as at the moment of speaking or writing. It does not indicate past time. Examples of this tense are:

I have done the assignment.

You have taken your book.

He has rushed his meal.

We have learned that topic.

You have disgraced yourselves.



*They have seen us.*

To form this tense, the verb 'have' combines with the past participle, e.g. *done, taken, learned*. Note that the third person singular takes the form 'has' to form the Present Perfect Tense while others take 'have'. Remember that the third person singular includes not only the pronouns *he/she/it* but also nominals such as *the man, John, the dog*, etc. *The man has left the premises.*

**Past Perfect Tense:** The Past perfect Tense indicates an action that had been concluded at a particular time in the past. Here we are thinking of two actions in the past, one happening before the other. We use the Past Perfect Tense for the first action and the Simple Past for the later, e.g.

*I had finished the work before you came.*

*The man had washed the car by the time we got there.*

*The women had swept the streets long before the first vehicle appeared.*

To form this tense the verb 'had' is combined with the past participle, e.g. *finished, washed, and swept*.

**Future Perfect Tense:** The Future Perfect Tense indicates an action that will have been concluded at a time we are looking forward to in the future, e.g.

*By 8p.m. I shall have finished writing this story.*

## CONTINUOUS TENSES:

Present Continuous Tense: this tense indicates an action in progress as at the time of speaking or writing, e.g.

I am writing this book.

You are reading this book.

John is crossing the road.

We are receiving a lecture.

The boys are walking to school.

The forms of the verb 'be' (am, are, is) are used together with the present participle (e.g. writing, reading) to form the present continuous tense.

Continuous tenses correspond with modern grammar's progressive aspect

**Past Continuous Tense:** The Past Continuous Tense indicates an action that was in progress at a particular time in the past before another happened.

The dog was crossing the road when a fast car hit it.

You were writing on the board.

Amaka was waiting for the bus when a car splashed water on her.

The past forms of the verb 'be' (was, were) combine with the present participle (e.g. drawing) to form this tense.

**Future Continuous Tense:** This indicates an action that will be in progress at a particular time in the future, e.g.

- (a) I shall be watching my favourite programme by the time you come this evening; so you may not get much attention from me.
- (b) The police will arrest the man very late this night. He will be sleeping by the time they come.

**OTHER TENSES:** Traditional Grammar also gives other minor tenses which are a combination of the perfect tenses and continuous tenses.

## EXERCISES

1. Supply the past tense, present participle and past participle of the following verbs: go, dance, stop, write, hit, drink, give, broadcast, swim, recognize.  
e.g. (walk) walked, walking, walked  
(sing) sang, singing, sung
2. Construct five sentences with each of the following:
  - (a) Verbs which are transitive
  - (b) Verbs which are intransitive
3. Rewrite the following sentences using these tenses: present continuous tense, simple past tense, present perfect tense, and past perfect tense.

- a. The teacher gives us good advice.
- b. The train arrives at the station by 9.a.m.
- c. We eat what we produce in our farms.
- d. The men speak their minds.
- e. You admit everybody to your room

### VOICE:

Transitive verbs have both the active voice and passive voice.

ACTIVE VOICE: John killed a goat yesterday.

PASSIVE VOICE: A goat was killed by John yesterday.

In the passive voice, the object of the active verb becomes the subject.

Sometimes the by-phrase after a passive verb is omitted, especially when the performer of the action is not known or is not the focus of attention, e.g.

*The gutters were cleared yesterday.*

*Offenders should be punished severely.*

*A new provost has been appointed.*

The passive verb is always a verb phrase consisting of a form of the verb 'be' (am, is, are, was, were, been, be, being) plus the past participle form of verbs, e.g. killed, eaten, seen, beaten, swum etc. examples:

'is killed'

- A fowl is killed every time that ritual is performed.

'were seen'

- They were seen by the police

'was beaten'

- He was beaten by criminals.

'has been removed' - The corpse has been removed.  
'was being written' - The examination was being written when the light suddenly went off.

## ADJECTIVE

Adjectives modify or qualify nouns and pronouns (and sometimes gerunds). Many adjectives have comparative and superlative inflections (ie forms): brave, braver, bravest. Most adjectives with more than one syllables form their comparative and superlative by adding 'more' and 'most' respectively: eg. *delicious, more delicious, most delicious*.

Also adjectives may be recognized by their suffixes. Suffixes such as -al, -able, -ant, -ative, -ish, -less, -ous, and -y may be added to certain verbs or nouns to form adjectives: e.g. *accept, repent (verb) acceptable, repentant (adjectives); angel, effort (nouns) angelic, effortless (adjectives)*.

## POSITIONS OF ADJECTIVES IN SENTENCES:

- (a) **ATTRIBUTIVE:** Adjectives are attributive (or used attributively) when they are placed immediately before the nouns which they qualify, e.g. *the new car*.  
(b) **PREDICATIVE:** Adjectives are predicative (or used predicatively) when they are part of the predicate thus separated from the nouns they qualify, e.g. *Your daughter is pretty*.

Predicative adjectives usually come after verbs of



incomplete predication e.g. 'to be' (is, am, are, was, were, been, etc), 'seem', 'appear', 'look', 'taste', 'feel', etc. Such predicative adjectives may be functioning as (i) subject complement or (ii) object complement.

- (i) The man is happy.
- (ii) The man made his wife sad.

(c) *POSTPOSITIVE*:

Adjectives can be used postpositively. Postpositive adjectives follow the items they qualify. Examples are:

The president <u>elect</u>	attorney <u>general</u>
The postmaster <u>general</u>	people <u>present</u>
The bridge <u>ahead</u>	something <u>larger</u>
The people <u>involved</u>	court <u>marital</u>

## KINDS OF ADJECTIVES

- (i) *DESCRIPTIVE ADJECTIVE*: This kind of adjective describes nouns. e.g I bought a new car (describes the noun 'car')  
John is happy (describes the noun 'John').
- (ii) *POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE*: Possessive adjective shows possession, e.g. Take your book. Over there is my house.
- (iii) *DEMONSTRATIVE ADJECTIVE*: This adjective points out persons or things referred to: That car belongs to me. Those chairs are strong. This girl is not serious.
- (iv) *INTERROGATIVE ADJECTIVE*: Interrogative adjectives are used in asking questions. They are

'what', 'which', and 'whose', and they must come directly before the nouns they modify. e.g.

What man are you talking about?

Which song do you prefer?

- (v) **EMPHASIZING ADJECTIVE**: (also called emphatic adjective).

This is my own book.

That very man denied the charge.

- (vi) **NUMERAL ADJECTIVE**: These are of two kinds:

(a) Cardinal, e.g. two women, a hundred workers

(b) Ordinal, e.g. the first semester, the sixth person

- (vii) **INDEFINITE ADJECTIVE**: e.g.

a, an, some,

- (viii) **DISTRIBUTIVE ADJECTIVE**:

He has given a gift to each person.

This happens on every occasion.

Either book will do.

## **DETERMINERS:**

Some grammar books treat determiners as belonging to a separate class of their own. In some books, determiners are included in other parts of speech.

Determiners mark the presence of a noun; that is, they announce that a noun is coming. The commonest determiners are:-

- (a) the articles:

(i) definite article - the

(ii) indefinite article - a, an, some,

- (b) \* possessive adjectives: my, our, their, his, her, its,

your, etc.

(c) other words: another, each, either, enough, etc.

### **ADVERB:**

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. An adverb may also modify a verbal (i.e. participles, infinitive, and gerund), or a whole phrase, clause, or sentence. Like adjectives, some adverbs can also have the comparative and superlative forms e.g. *soon, sooner, soonest*. *The great majority of adverbs have an -ly suffix. Such adverbs are formed from adjectives and the -ing form of verbs, e.g. glad –gladly shy-shyly,*

*knowing – knowingly. joking – jokingly.*

*Some adverbs have the suffix –wise, as in lengthwise, clockwise, etc*

### **KINDS OF ADVERBS:**

Adverbs are classified, according to their meaning, into adjuncts, conjuncts or disjuncts.

**(A) ADJUNCTS:** Adjuncts are adverbs used in sentences which indicate place, time, manner, frequency and degree. Adjuncts unlike conjunct and disjuncts, are integrated into the clause.

**PLACE ADJUNCT** (also called *adverb of place*): this tells where an action is done, e.g. He lives here.

**TIME ADJUNCT (ADVERB OF TIME):** e.g.

*We shall discuss that today. I would like to see you now.*

**MANNER ADJUNCT (Adverb of manner):** e.g.

*Do it carefully. We did the work well. It is going clock-wise.*

**FREQUENCY ADJUNCT (Adverb of frequency):** e.g.

*I often wash my car.  
Does she always dress well.  
I have been to London once.*

*This kind of adverb tells how often something is done.*

**DEGREE ADJUNCTS (Adverbs of degree):** e.g.

*Ada is very tall.  
This tea is too hot.  
He nearly lost his life in that accident*

**(B) CONJUNCTS:**

Conjuncts are adverbs and adverb phrases which introduce new sentences and also link them to what has been said before. They are linking adverbs. e.g:

*I have two reasons to doubt what you said. Firstly, you hesitated before saying it. Secondly, you look unserious.  
I don't have time to attend that meeting. Moreover, I'm not well.*

Conjuncts include words and phrases such as furthermore, moreover, anyway, meanwhile, in the first place, in addition, for example, for instance etc.

(C) **DISJUNCTS:**

Disjuncts express the attitude of the speaker towards a given sentence. Disjuncts modify the whole sentence. e.g.

Honestly, I do not know him.

Certainly, he is rich

He will come, perhaps.

Personally, I don't approve of her.

**OTHER ADVERBS:**

(i) **RELATIVE ADVERBS:** Relative adverbs are such adverbs as 'when' and 'where' if they are used to join clauses together. They are then relative or conjunctive adverbs. e.g. Nobody knows when he will come. That is the place where he was buried.

(ii) **INTERROGATIVE ADVERBS:** e.g

How did you do it?

Where did he go?

When will they come?

Why did you do that?

(iii) **NEGATIVE ADVERBS:** eg.

I have never seen him

He's not going away.



## PRONOUN:

Pronouns are words used instead of nouns to avoid the unnecessary repetition of such nouns.

### KINDS OF PRONOUNS:

#### 1) PERSONAL PRONOUNS:

	SINGULAR		PLURAL	
	SUBJECT	OBJECT	SUBJECT	OBJECT
1 <sup>st</sup> person	I	me	we	us
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	you	you	you	you
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	he/she/it	him/her/it	they	them

(2) DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS: This, these, that, those, such, former, latter, e.g. This is my book  
Those are yours.

(Note: In the sentence 'I want this book', 'this' is a demonstrative adjective because it is followed directly by the noun 'book').

(3) EMPHASIZING PRONOUNS: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves and themselves as used in these sentences:

He did it himself.

We ourselves wrote the examination.

(4) REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves and themselves as used in the following sentences:

The man killed himself.

He looked at himself in the mirror.

The difference between emphasizing pronouns and reflexive pronouns is that reflexive pronouns are the objects of the verbs in the sentences they occur. For example, 'himself' is the object of 'killed' in the first sentence. In the sentence, 'He did it himself' the object of the verb 'did' is 'it'. Emphasizing pronouns are used for emphasis..

(5) POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS: mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, yours and theirs. e.g.

*That house is mine.*

*Is that goat ours?*

(NOTE: in the sentence 'This is my house', 'my' is a possessive adjective. Possessive adjectives come directly before the noun but possessive pronouns do not).

(6) INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS: What, who, whose, which, who, whom (that is, when used in asking questions). e.g

*What did you say?, Whom did you give the pen to?*

(7) RELATIVE PRONOUNS: that, who, whom, whose, which, what, These are pronouns and also join two clauses together. e.g

*I have bought the book that the teacher asked us to buy.*

*This is the man whose car was stolen.*

Relative pronouns begin relative clauses.

(8) INDEFINITE PRONOUNS: some, somebody, something, someone, any, anything, anybody, anyone, all, no, none, nothing, nobody, another, none, one, every, everything, everybody, everyone, other, much, less, few, a few, little, a little, enough, each, either, neither. Some of these words can be used adjectivally as determiners,

Ask John if he has any. (pronoun)

Have you any matches (adjective)

The notice said: 'All boys must be in school by 9 o'clock (adjective). But all were not there at 9 O'clock. (pronoun).

Note that as adjectives they are placed directly before the noun.

## **CONJUNCTION:**

Conjunctions are words used to join words, phrases or sentences together.

## **KINDS OF CONJUNCTIONS:**

(A) CO-ORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS: and, or, but, nor, yet.

e.g *Books and pens are necessary to write.*

(B) SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS: after, although.

as because, before, if, once, since, that, though, till, unless, until, when, whenever, where, wherever, while.

e.g. *The man arrived after we had left.* This joins the two clauses 'The man arrived' and 'we had left'.

(C) CORRELATIVES: 'either ... or', 'neither ... nor', 'both .... and', 'not only ..... but also'. Correlatives always have two elements e.g. 'either' and 'or'.

e.g. *You must either read or fail.*

*He not only condemns corruption but also makes sure offenders are punished.*

### **PREPOSITION:**

The preposition always has an object which is usually a noun or a pronoun. The preposition links and relates its object to some other word in the sentence, e.g. 'There is a man in the room'.

The preposition 'in' relates the noun 'room' to the verb 'is'.

Examples of prepositions: about, above, across, after, against, along, among, around, at, before, behind, below, beside, besides, between, beyond, by, concerning, despite, down, during, except, excepting, for, from, in, inside, into, like, near, of, off, on, onto, out, outside, over, past, regarding, round, since, through, throughout, till, to, toward, under, underneath, until, up, upon, without, etc.

There are also phrasal prepositions such as:

according to, apart from, as for, as regards, as to, because of, by means of, due to, in addition to, in case of, in front of, in spite of, with respect to, as far as, with reference to, with the exception of. There are many more.

### **INTERJECTION:**

Interjections are exclamations. Examples: wow!, oh!, That's a surprise! Alas! etc.

### **5.3. THE PHRASE:**

The phrase (called group in some grammars) is the next in rank after the word. The phrase is defined in Traditional Grammar as a group of words without a finite verb. (Note that what phrase means here is not the same as in the modern model of grammar called Transformational Generative Grammar where a phrase can be made up of one word only). A phrase functions as a single part of speech – noun, adjective, adverb etc.

### **KINDS OF PHRASES:**

(A) **NOUN PHRASE:** A noun phrase is a group of words without a finite verb functioning as a noun. It can function as subject, object, complement of a verb, object of preposition etc.

Examples:

- (i) A contingent of ECOMOG troops landed in Sierra Leone. (subject of the sentence/subject of the verb 'landed').
- (ii) He was given the car with bad tyres. (object of the



verb 'given')

- (iii) *What he demanded was a half-boiled egg* (complement of the verb 'was'). (note that such verbs as 'was' are not transitive and do not take objects, but complements).
- (iv) *He asked for a glass of water*. (object of preposition 'for').

#### (B) ADJECTIVAL PHRASE:

Adjectival phrases qualify nouns or pronouns like ordinary adjectives and participles. Example are:

- (i) *He was given the car with bad tyres*. (This qualifies the noun 'car').
- (ii) *The house on the hill is the king's palace*. (Qualifies the noun 'house').

#### (C) ADVERBIAL PHRASE:

Adverbial phrases do the same functions as adverbs. Examples are:

- i. *Okeke built his house on a hill*. (adverbial phrase of place qualifying the verb 'built').
- ii. *They divided it into two equal parts*. (Adverbial phrase of manner qualifying 'divided').
- iii. *He rang the bell at eleven o'clock* (Adverbial phrase of time qualifying 'rang').

Note that a particular phrase can function as an adjectival or adverbial depending on where it is located in a particular sentence. For example, the phrase "on the (a) hill" in sentence B (ii) answers the question 'what

kind of house?' In sentence C (i) it answers the question 'Built where?'

#### (D) PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE:

The prepositional phrase is used in the modern model of grammar to refer to a phrase beginning with a preposition and ending with a noun or noun equivalent as in 'in the room'. However, in Traditional Grammar prepositional phrases refer to such phrases functioning as preposition, 'for example', 'according to, in spite of', 'instead of' etc.

e.g. *He came in spite of the warning.*

#### (E) VERBAL PHRASE:

A verbal phrase is a group of words functioning as the finite verb of a sentence. It is usually made up of the main verb and one or more auxiliary verbs. e.g.

*He could have been eating frogs.*

### 5.4. THE CLAUSE:

A clause is a group of related words that contains both a subject and a predicate and that functions as a part of a sentence. An essential part of the predicate is a finite verb. We have main clause and subordinate clause. A main clause expresses a complete thought and can stand by itself whereas a subordinate clause cannot stand alone. It functions as a single part of speech.

MAIN CLAUSE	SUBORDINATE CLAUSE
-------------	--------------------

e.g. *He took off his Jacket because it was very hot.*

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MAIN CLAUSE                      SUBORDINATE CLAUSE

e.g. *He took off his Jacket because it was very hot.*

## KINDS OF CLAUSES:

(A) NOUN CLAUSE: A noun clause is a clause which functions as a noun.

A noun clause may perform the following functions in a sentence.

- (i) As subject of a sentence, e.g.  
*who wins the race does not really matter.*  
*That Mary could say that surprised everybody.*
- (ii) As direct object of a verb, e.g.  
*We grow whatever we eat.*  
*The football fans admired what the goalkeeper did.*
- (iii) As object of a preposition, e.g.  
*Give the tools to whoever can use them best.*  
*We have to decide on what to do.*  
*Take the money from whoever offers it.*
- (ii) In apposition to a noun, e.g.  
*The fact that he said so is sufficient proof.*  
*The committee took the decision that lowering the price would raise demand.*

## (A) ADJECTIVAL CLAUSE:

Adjectival clauses (also called relative clauses) are usually introduced by the relative pronouns *who*, *whose*, *whom*, *which* or *that*.

An adjectival clause qualifies a noun or pronoun. Examples are:

- (i) *Everyone needs friends who are loyal (qualifies 'friends').*



- (ii) The boys who committed various offences were flogged.
- (iii) The child whose mother died was taken into custody.
- (iv) The table which leg was broken has been sent to the workshop for repair.

Note that it is not all relative clauses that are adjectival.

It is only the defining relative clauses like the ones in the sentences above. The ones referred to as non-defining relative clauses are not adjectival. Adjectival clauses, as above, tell us which one or kind of object referred to, whereas the non-defining relative clause, which is not adjectival, only gives additional information about the noun referred to, e.g.

*"The boys, who committed various offences, were flogged".*

This sentence means that all the boys were flogged and all of them committed various offences. However, in the one under adjectival clause, that is sentence (ii), it is not all the boys that were flogged. It is only those who committed various offences.

Non-defining relative clauses are usually marked off by a pair of commas (one at the beginning and one at the end).

### (C) **ADVERBIAL CLAUSES:**

Adverbial clauses do the work of adverbs



## KINDS OF ADVERBIAL CLAUSES:

1. Adverbial clause of manner: This tells how an action is done and is usually introduced by the conjunctions, 'as', 'as if', 'as though', Examples are:  
*He behaves as if he is rich*  
*Amaka spoke as though nothing mattered.*
2. Adverbial clause of place: This indicates where an action is done and is usually introduced by 'where' or 'wherever'. Examples are:  
*The man settled where he would be comfortable*  
*The baby went wherever her mother did.*
3. Adverbial clause of time: This is usually introduced by 'when', 'while', 'after', 'before', 'until', 'since', 'as', 'as soon as',  
Examples: *When it rains, I usually go to the office by bus.*  
*I learned a lot of Hausa while I was in Kano.*
4. Adverbial clause of reason: This clause is usually introduced by 'because', 'since', 'as', 'seeing that', 'now that' etc. Examples are:  
*He could not attend the meeting because it was raining.*  
*Since you don't have time, I don't need to bother you.*  
*Now that Emeka has left school, he has to find something to do.*
5. Adverbial clause of purpose: This is introduced by 'so that', 'in order that', 'for fear that', 'so that ... not'. Examples are:

*Some people leave the country so that they may be rich.*

*He borrowed my tool in order that he may repair his car.*

6. Adverbial clause of comparison: This is introduced by 'as' and 'than'. e.g.

*The examination was not as difficult as I thought  
I was given more food than I could eat.*

7. Adverbial clause of concession: This is introduced by 'though', 'although', 'even though', 'even if', 'wherever', 'whenever', 'however', 'whether...or not', 'no matter' whether...or not;, e.g.

*Although he studied hard, he could not pass the JAMB examination.*

*He cannot win the election even if he is rich.*

*Whether he bribes the people or not, nobody will vote for him*

*Obi could not get the US visa however hard he tried.*

8. Adverbial clause of condition: This clause is introduced by 'if', 'as long as', 'unless', 'whether', 'provided that', 'on condition that', 'supposing', e.g.

*He will do well if given the opportunity.*  
*As long as you do not read, you will not pass the examination.*

*Unless we leave early, we will miss the bus*

*You will not be punished provided you obey the school rules.*

9. Adverbial clause of result: This is usually introduced by 'so that' not followed by 'may', 'might' or 'should'

as in the case of adverbial clause of purpose.  
Examples of Adverbial clause of result are:  
*The classroom was noisy so that nobody heard what the lecturer said.*

### 5.5. THE SENTENCE:

A sentence is a group of words which has a subject and a finite verb and which expresses a complete thought. It is an independent unit of expression. It is above the clause in rank and is the highest unit in the grammatical hierarchy. Examples:

He is always optimistic.

His mission is clearly defined.

#### Types of Sentences

A. Sentences are classified, according to structure, as simple, compound or complex.

**SIMPLE SENTENCE:** - A simple sentence contains one finite verb. It is made up of one main clause e.g

*The boy eats a lot.*

*Do you eat beans?*

#### COMPOUND SENTENCE:

This is when two or more sentences are joined by a conjunction (or conjunctions). It contains two or more main clauses without a subordinate clause, e.g

I am teaching you English and you are listening to me.

Bring your book here and open it at page 4; but don't read.

Stay there or you'll be punished.

### COMPLEX SENTENCE:

A complex sentence is one that has one or more subordinate clauses and a main clause. The subordinate clause functions as adjective, adverb or noun. Examples:

That is the house which I want (adjectival clause).

The thief ran away when he saw the policeman (Adverbial clause of time).

### COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCE:

A compound-complex sentence is one which is a compound sentence made up of two or more main clauses. Then, one or more of the main clauses have one or more subordinate clauses.

MAIN	SUBORDINATE	MAIN
The thief ran away <u>when he saw the policeman</u> , but he was shot dead.		

B. Sentences are also classified, according to the function they perform, as follows:

1. Statement (declarative sentence) e.g. *We are studying English.*
2. Question (interrogative sentence) e.g. *Do you understand the lesson?*
3. Command (imperative sentence) e.g. *Close your books.*
4. Exclamation (exclamatory sentence) e.g. *What a car!*

5. Desire or wish (subjunctive sentence) e.g *May you live long.*

### **SENTENCE ELEMENTS AND BASIC PATTERNS:**

A sentence is usually composed of two parts: the subject and predicate. Examples:

#### **SUBJECT**

The boy

The dog

The girl

#### **PREDICATE**

hit the dog

bit the boy

read the books.

The subject is the person or thing about which something is said in the sentence. The predicate is what is said about the person or thing. The subject of a sentence is a noun, pronoun, or noun equivalent. The key element in the predicate is the verb.

### **5.5.1 SENTENCE ELEMENTS**

Apart from the division of a sentence into subject and predicate, a sentence is composed of distinct segments called elements. The elements of a sentence are subject, verb, object, complement and adverbial. These are abbreviated as SVOCA.

i. **Subject (S):** The subject of a sentence can be noun, pronoun, noun phrase, noun clause, gerund or infinitive. The subject and the verb are the elements that are obligatory to every sentence.

ii. **Verb (V):** As said earlier, the verb is an essential



element in a sentence. As a matter of fact, some utterances are made up of just the verb e.g. Come. The nature of the verb will determine the pattern of a particular sentence. For example, a verb which is transitive selects object e.g.

The man killed a goat (SVO)

A verb which is intransitive does not require an object e.g.

The child cried (SV).

The verb of a sentence can be made up of a single main verb (e.g. eat), or a main verb with one or more auxiliary verbs (e.g. can eat, can be eaten etc.).

iii. **Object (O):** The object of a sentence is made up of the same components as the subject i.e. noun, pronoun, noun phrase, noun clause, gerund or infinitive. It should be noted that the object is one of the elements that do not occur in every sentence. It is only transitive verbs that require objects. We have direct object and indirect object. The action of the verb affects the direct object directly. The action of the verb affects the indirect object indirectly eg.

I took the book (direct object)

John gave the boy a book. (indirect object)

iv. **Complement (C):** The complement of a sentence can be made up of a noun or noun substitutes listed under subject. It can also be made up of an adjective or adjective phrase or clause.

The man is a trader (noun phrase)

The man became rich (adjective)

We have two kinds of complement: subject complement and object complement. Subject complement refers to the same person or thing as the subject. The object complement refers to the same person or thing as the object. e.g

- a. We appointed Obi our leader (noun phrase as object complement).
- b. Obi made us happy (adjective as object complement)

'Obi' and 'our leader' refer to the same person in sentence (a) and 'Obi' is the object of the verb 'appointed'. Examples of subject complement are "a trader" and "rich" in the first two sentences.

**v. Adverbial (A):** The adverbial can be made up of an adverb (e.g. immediately), an adverb phrase (e.g. in the room), or an adverbial clause (e.g. while we were waiting). The adverbial is one of the elements that do not occur in every sentence.

Finally, a typical sentence is composed of the subject and verb, and may or may not contain one or more of the other elements. Whatever possible combination of elements depends on the nature of the verb. The basic possible combination of elements is given below. Other non-basic sentences are expansions of the basic patterns

with a recurring of one or more of the elements.

### 5.5.2 THE BASIC SENTENCE PATTERNS:

Here are the basic sentence patterns in English which can be expanded to give the complex types.

#### 1. SVO (subject + verb + object)

SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT (direct)
Somebody	caught	the ball
The man	brought	the gift
I	remember	seeing him
We	grow	whatever we eat.

#### 2. SVOO (subject +verb+indirect object+direct object)

Subject	Verb	Direct Object	Direct Object
He	gives	her	expensive gifts
The huge dog	gave	the visitor	a fright

Verbs in this pattern have both a direct and an indirect object. Such verbs are give, offer, bring, take, lend, send, buy, and sell.

#### 3. SVOA (subject + verb + direct object + adverbial (adjunct))

Subject	Verb	Direct Object	Adverbial (Adjunct)
I	put	the plate	on the table
Ada	placed	her hands	on her hips.

The transitive verbs in the SVOA, in addition to requiring an object, obligatorily require an adverbial. \* I

put the plate" is not a complete statement. However, we may also have the ordinary SVO pattern which has an optional A, e.g. *Somebody caught the ball immediately*

#### 4. SVC (subject + verb + subject complement)

Subject	Verb	Subject Complement	
Mary	is	kind	(adjective)
Mary	is	a nurse	(noun phrase)
The man	felt	a disappointing fool	(noun phrase)
Obasanjo	became	Nigeria's president	(noun phrase)
Ngozi	appears	unserious	(adjective)

The subject complement helps to complete the meaning of intransitive linking verbs. The linking verbs are the verb 'be' (is, are, am, was etc), seem, become, feel, look, smell, sound, taste and so on. These are called verbs of incomplete predication.

#### 5. S V O C (subject + verb + object + object complement)

Subject	Verb	Object	Object Complement	
We	have proved	him	wrong	(adjective)
They	consider	John	a fool	(noun phrase)
The man	made	his wife	happy	(adjective)

An object complement refers to, identifies, or qualifies the direct object. Object complements help to complete the meaning of such verbs as 'make', 'name', 'elect', 'call', 'find', 'consider', 'appoint', 'nominate', 'choose' etc. Both the subject complement and object complement can be a noun, pronoun, noun substitute or



adjective.

6. S V (subject + verb)

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>
The sun	rose
The child	cried
The girl	laughed
A leaf	fell

The verbs in this pattern are intransitive. They do not require objects to complete their meanings.

7. S V A (subject + verb + adverbial (adjunct))

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>VERB</b>	<b>ADVERBIAL (ADJUNCT)</b>
Mary	is	in the house
The students	are	outside
The baby	is lying	in her cot

The verbs in this pattern are called linking verbs. They are intransitive verbs and do not take objects. They obligatorily require adverbials to complete their meanings. The pattern SVA should not be confused with SV (A) where the adverbial is an optional element as in the sentences.

The sun rose early

The child cried loudly.

The sentences are of the SV pattern with an optional adverbial.



There could be other variations such as ASV e.g.  
*Gradually, the sun rose.*  
*Softly, the leaf fell.*

When such modifying words, phrases or even clauses accompany the intransitive or transitive verbs we call this 'expansion' and it gives rise to more complex sentences.

## EXERCISE

1. Supply the name and grammatical function of the underlined words or phrases in the passage above:

### A defiant moment

One night on the bluff overlooking the Rift valley in Kenya, I was among 26 young girls standing in a cluster, waiting to be circumcised. We were all under the age of seventeen, beautifully dressed in skin shawls and beaded finery. Our legs were painted in red ochre, patterned like fine giraffe markings. From a short distance away came the strains of a song; throaty sounds that mingled with the jingle of bangles and the chink of chains, punctuated by a crashing sound as two dozen feet stomped in unison. This carried on for a while before a high-pitched voice pierced the night air and echoed across the hills of Nandi hills. "Don't discard your traditions, you children, be firm about them," the voice boomed. This circumcision song has been sung by generations of Nandi youth."

(Culled from BBC focus on Africa magazine of April – June 2004, page 62)

2. From the passage above write out four different prepositions and at least one conjunction.
3. Write out the pattern of the following sentences.
- (a) The long bridge has fallen down.
  - (b) The problem requires a quick solution.
  - (c) The old man gave everybody a pleasant smile.
  - (d) Whatever we do should not bother you.
  - (e) Mgbechi hid her food under her bed.

### 5.5.3 SENTENCE AGREEMENT (CONCORD)

#### WHAT IS CONCORD?

There is a kind of grammatical relationship which exists between elements of a sentence whereby the presence of one element determines the choice of another element. Take, for example, the following sentences.

1. (a) The boys are here.
- (b) The boy is here

The presence of the plural subject "boys" requires the choice of the plural form of the verb "are" in sentence 1 (a). Also in sentence 1 (b) the presence of the singular subject "boy" determines the choice of the singular form of the verb "is". This kind of relationship is called concord or sentence agreement.

The inadequate knowledge of the rules of concord, among other factors, is responsible for a lot of wrong sentences we notice among the second language speakers of the English language like Nigerians, especially the less educated ones. It is not uncommon to hear sentences like these:

2. (a) \*I don't know why people does not mind their business.
  - (b) I don't know why people do not mind their business.
- 
- 3.(a) \*He is one of the people who has refused to change in this country.

- (b) He is one of the people who have refused to change in this country.
- 4.(a) \*I told the students, "You harm yourself and not the school authority when you destroy school properties [sic]".
- (b) I told the students, "You harm yourselves and not the school authority when you destroy school property."

**Note:** The asterisk put before a sentence means that the sentence is ungrammatical. Let us now look at some of the forms of concord in the English language.

## SUBJECT – VERB CONCORD

When it comes to subject-verb concord, the following points should be noted.

- (i) In English, the subject of a sentence agrees in number with its verb. This means that a plural subject takes a plural verb, whereas a singular subject takes a singular verb, as noted in sentences 1 (a) and (b) above. See also the following sentences.
- (a) The girls sing beautifully.
- (b) The girl sings beautifully.

The verbs 'are' and 'sing' are plural verbs. On the other hand, the verb 'is' and 'sings' are singular verbs.

The third person singular (he / she / it) takes the form of the verb with 's' or 'es' in the simple present tense.

e.g. *sings, pushes*. However, we have 'is' and 'has' for the verb 'be' and 'have' respectively. The first person singular takes 'am' in the simple present tense and the second person singular takes 'are'. Examples:

I am a student.

You are a student.

In the other tenses the verbs do not change to indicate singular or plural.

The girls sang beautifully (simple past)

The girl sang beautifully (simple past)

The girls will sing beautifully (simple future)

The girl will sing beautifully (simple future)

The only exception where the verb changes in the simple past tense to indicate number (singular) is with the verb 'be'. Examples:

*I was a student. (first person singular)*

*\*You was a student. (second person singular)*

*We were students. (first person plural)*

*You were students. (second person plural)*

*They were students. (third person plural)*

Note that the second person singular 'you' does not take the singular form 'was'. It takes the plural form 'were'.  
'You were a student.'

- (ii) Collective nouns are often regarded as being singular and as such take a singular verb. e.g.



- (a) The crowd is large
- (b) The football team has arrived
- (c) My family lives in the rural area.

However, when we are thinking of the individual items or members that make up the collective noun we use the plural form of the verbs. e.g.

- (d) The football team are quarrelling with one another
- (e) My family have called to tell me of the death of Sir Nwokoro.

The following nouns are used with a plural verb: people, public, police, clergy, cattle. e.g.

- (f) The public are warned to be on the alert for criminals.
- (g) The police are your friends.
- (h) The clergy live exemplary lives.

**(iii)** Two or more subjects co-joined by the conjunction 'and' take a plural verb e.g.

Obi and Ada are students.

However, when we consider the two items joined together by 'and' as a single unit we use the singular verb.

- (a) Beans and rice is my favorite meal.
- (b) The secretary and legal adviser of the company was present at the meeting (One person doing the two jobs)
- (iv)** If two singular subjects are joined by a subordinating

linking phrase (e.g. as well as, in addition to, including, together with, no less than etc) a singular verb is required:

- (a) Mr. Madu together with his wife was promoted.
  - (b) James including Ada is attending the party.
  - (c) A machete as well as a shovel is required.
- (v) Singular subjects joined by 'or', 'neither...nor', 'either...or', 'not only... but as well', etc. take singular verbs:
- (a) A spoon or a fork is needed.
  - (b) Neither the boy nor the girl has come yet.
  - (c) Not only my purse but also my money was lost.

However, if one subject is singular and another is plural, by the rule of proximity the verb agrees with the nearest subject, e.g.

- (d) The children or their mother is responsible for this
- (e) The woman or her children are responsible for this
- (f) Neither my wife nor I am to blame.

In colloquial speech, however, the following sentence can be accepted:

Neither he nor his wife have arrived

[cf. Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973: 179]

- (vi) The indefinite pronouns/adjectives (each, every, everybody, everyone, anyone, anybody, no one, nobody, none, somebody, someone etc) take singular verbs:

- (a) Everybody is supposed to fill in a form.
- (b) None of the invited guests has arrived.
- (c) Each participant gets an award.

In notional concord (that is, when we consider the idea that more than one persons / things are involved) a plural verb is used in such sentences as the following:

- (d) None of the invited guests are here.

However, such a sentence is more appropriate in colloquial spoken language than in standard usage. The word 'number' may take a singular or plural verb depending on the sense it is used:

- (e) The number of people who have so far registered is reasonable.
- (f) A number of people are to be promoted.

The phrase 'more than' conforms to grammatical concord:

- (g) More than twenty students were expelled.
- (h) More than one person was expelled.

(vii) Mathematical computations may take singular or plural verbs

- (a) Two times two is four
- (b) Two times two are four.

(viii) Note that some words, even though in form they seem plural, are actually singular and take singular

verbs e.g. *news, measles, economics* (and other such subjects), etc.

e.g. *The news is good.*

- (ix) The expletive 'it' usually takes singular verb  
e.g. It was ten years ago that he arrived here.  
The other expletive 'there' agrees with the number of the real subject e.g.  
There were three men in that car.  
There was a man in that car.

### **SUBJECT / OBJECT – COMPLEMENT CONCORD**

Another form of concord is that existing between the subject or object and its complement. If one is plural, the other must be plural. Also if one is singular, the other has to be singular:

The girl is a student.

The girls are students

We elected the man our councilor

We elected the men our councilors.

### **PRONOUN- ANTECEDENT CONCORD**

A pronoun agrees in number, person and gender with its antecedent.

The man stopped. He looked around.

The men stopped. They looked around.

Possessive adjectives also conform to the same concord:

Everyone writes his name.

All the men wrote their names.

However, in colloquial language the following sentence, which seems to violate grammatical concord, is accepted:

Everyone paid their monthly dues.

This is notional concord considering the idea that more than one person are involved.

### EXERCISE

Fill the blank space with the right option from the bracket.

1. Lucy is one of the beautiful girls who —— well. (behave / behaves).
2. The people of my village —— hard. (work / works).
3. One of the branches —— broken (has / have).
4. The large crowd —— intimidating (was / were).
5. The police —— raided my village twice. (has / have).
6. The governor including his commissioners —— touring the state (are / is).
7. Not only mosquitoes but also flies —— trapped by this net. (is / are).
8. Either those plates or just a pot —— enough to contain the food. (is / are).
9. None of you —— permitted to leave (is / are).
10. There —— six men trying to cross. (were / was)



## 5.6 DIRECT AND REPORTED SPEECH

When we wish to record what people have said or reproduce what they have written we can either quote their actual words (direct speech) or use our own words to report what they said or wrote (indirect or reported speech).

### (A) DIRECT SPEECH

As said earlier, we can report what someone has said or written using the actual words of the person. This direct speech of the speaker or writer is enclosed between single or double quotation marks (also called inverted commas). e.g.

- (i) Emeka said, "It is twelve o' clock."
- (ii) Ndudim wrote, "Shakespeare shows much understanding of human nature when he writes 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are under things'." (quotation within a quotation)

The words indicating the speaker often come before the quoted speech and are linked to them by a comma. e.g.

Emeka said,....

Ndudim wrote,....

Sometimes, however, these may come at the end of the quoted items or even in the middle (especially in fiction):

"It is twelve o' clock," Emeka said.

"It is getting dark," Emeka said. "we should set out at once."

"Why, William," said his mother, "you're not going to die, so why talk about it?"

In recording short verbatim statements by various speakers, or a discussion, it is convenient to use the method adopted in plays where a colon introduces the direct speech without enclosing it in quotation marks.

ADA: Shouldn't we go and visit granny?

UCHE: That would be nice.

ADA: So, when do you suggest we go? etc.

## **(B) REPORTED SPEECH (INDIRECT SPEECH)**

In reported or indirect speech we report what someone has said or written using our own words. Such words are not enclosed in quotation marks. We usually use the conjunction "that" to link the reported speech except in reporting questions.

**Direct:** Ogechi said, "I got the answer right".

**Indirect:** Ogechi said that she got the answer right.

The following points should be noted about the reported speech:

1. If the verb introducing the reported speech is past tense, all the finite verbs change as follows:
  - a. Present becomes past ('He does' becomes 'He did')
  - b. Past becomes past perfect ('He ate', becomes 'He had eaten')

- c. Future becomes past ('He will' becomes 'He would')
2. However, if the reported speech is introduced with a verb in the present tense or future tense, the reported speech maintains its tense:

DIRECT: Obi says, "I am ready to write."

INDIRECT: Obi says that he is ready to write.

DIRECT: The boy will say, "I am not guilty."

INDIRECT: The boy will say that he is not guilty

DIRECT: Nneka says, "I was cheated".

INDIRECT: Nneka says that she was cheated

3. If the reported speech states an action that is universally or habitually true, the tense of the verb does not change.

DIRECT: The teacher said, "The earth rotates."

INDIRECT: The teacher said that the earth rotates.

DIRECT: The Provost said, "The College runs a degree programme."

INDIRECT: The Provost said that the College runs a degree programme.

4. The persons of the pronouns and verbs in the reported speech correspond to those of the individuals referred to in the original speech:

DIRECT: Obi said, "I know the man."

INDIRECT: Obi said that he (Obi) knew the man.

DIRECT: Obi said to Uche, "I passed the exam."

INDIRECT: Obi told Uche that he (Obi) passed the exam.

Note that to avoid ambiguity we had to write out the person that the personal pronoun 'he' refers to (that is Obi). Also note the changes in the personal pronoun. The first person pronoun "I" changes to third person pronoun "he" etc.

5. Some words expressing nearness in place, time, or manner are changed in the reported speech to ones that express remoteness.

<i>this</i>	changes	to	<i>that</i>
<i>these</i>	changes	to	<i>those</i>
<i>here</i>	changes	to	<i>there</i>
<i>now</i>	changes	to	<i>then</i>
<i>today</i>	changes	to	<i>that day</i>
<i>tomorrow</i>	changes	to	<i>the next day</i>
<i>yesterday</i>	changes	to	<i>the day before or the previous day</i>
<i>last night</i>	changes	to	<i>the night before or the previous night</i>
<i>ago</i>	changes	to	<i>before</i>
<i>hereby</i>	changes	to	<i>thereby etc.</i>

However, if *this*, *these*, *here*, *now* etc refer to objects that are still there at the place the speaker is speaking, they do not change, e.g. Obi said, "This is the book Emeka gave me".

Obi said that this was the book Emeka gave him.  
(That is, the book is physically present there)

Such forms of direct address as 'ladies' and

gentlemen" used in direct speech are not included in reported speech.

## **REPORTED QUESTIONS**

Words expressing interrogation such as 'asked', 'enquired' etc are used. These may be followed by 'whether' or 'if' e.g.

**DIRECT:** Obi said to Uche, "When is the bus leaving?"

**INDIRECT:** Obi enquired from Uche when the bus was leaving.

**DIRECT:** Obi said to me, "Do you know the answer?"

**INDIRECT:** Obi asked me if I knew the answer.

**DIRECT:** The girl said to the boy, "Are you all right?"

**INDIRECT:** The girl asked the boy whether he was all right.

## **REPORTED COMMANDS OR REQUESTS**

Words expressing command or request such as 'told', 'ordered' are used.

**DIRECT:** The teacher said to the student, "Leave the classroom."

**INDIRECT:** The teacher ordered the student to leave the classroom.

**DIRECT:** Obi said to Ada, "Lend me your pen, please".

**INDIRECT:** Obi requested Ada to lend him her pen.



## REPORTED EXCLAMATION AND WISHES

In reporting exclamation, words expressing the force of the original speech are used. Also words expressing wish are used in reporting wishes.

DIRECT: The man said, "Oh, what a disaster!"

INDIRECT: The man cried out what a disaster it was.

DIRECT: The woman said, "My goodness! I'm lost!"

INDIRECT: The woman exclaimed that she was lost.

DIRECT: The priest said to the people, "May God bless you all."

INDIRECT: The priest prayed God to bless the people.

DIRECT: The man said, "I wish I could win the election."

INDIRECT: The man wished he could win the election.

## EXCERCISE

- a. Change the following to direct speech. Use the simple present tense.
1. Ngozi said that she was right.
  2. The teacher said that the assignment was to be submitted the next day.
  3. Obi asked his father if he (Emeka) could attend the party.
  4. The girl exclaimed that the gift was wonderful.
  5. The man wished that he still had the strength to play football.

- b. Change to reported speech:
1. The headmaster said, "Children, get ready to visit the zoo tomorrow."
  2. The boy said to his mother, "Mummy, can I take my toy to school?"
  3. The girl said, "Oh, what a car!"
  4. Emeka said to Obi, "You are right."
  5. The chairman said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I feel so honoured to be in your midst today. I have every assurance that this year will be a favourable one for our organization."

## 5.7 PUNCTUATION

In spoken language, the use of pauses and variation in the pitch of the voice, as in tone movements and intonation, helps to determine speech segments and sentence function such as statement, question etc. In written language, punctuation serves this purpose. Without punctuation it would be difficult to know where one sentence ends and another begins. It would be difficult to know whether a sentence is to be taken as a statement, a question or even an exclamation. Improper punctuation, as well, can distort the meaning of a sentence. It is, therefore, imperative that students master punctuation so as to be effective communicators when they write.

The punctuation marks are the following: full stop (also called period), question mark, exclamation mark, comma, quotation marks (also called inverted commas),

apostrophe, semi-colon, colon, dash, brackets, ellipsis, hyphen and capital letters.

## 1. **FULL STOP (PERIOD) (.)**

i. The full stop (also called period in American English) is used to mark the end of a sentence that is not a question or exclamation. A sentence should begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop, a question mark or an exclamation mark. Here are examples of sentences ending with full stops.

- a. The man has finally arrived.
- b. Before setting out early in the morning, he usually taps his palm wine.

It is a fault in writing to put a full stop at the end of a group of words that is not a sentence. For example, some students can put a full stop after the phrase "Before setting out early in the morning". Another fault is joining two sentences together with a comma separating them. For example, some students can join sentences (a) and (b) thus:

The man has finally arrived, before setting out early in the morning, he usually taps his palm wine.

(ii) The full stop is also used after abbreviations.

Prof. Nkudi, J.A.M.B. No. 207 e.g. etc. 10 a.m.

However, abbreviations can also be written without full stops.

JAMB Dr Uwadi Mr Madu UNESCO

## 2. QUESTION MARK (?)

Question marks are used at the end of interrogative sentences:

*What is your name?*

*"What is your name?" he asked.*

*Are you a student?*

*The man asked, "Are you a student?"*

Do not use question marks at the end of indirect questions as in reported speech.

**Wrong:** *He asked me if I was a student?*

**Correct:** *He asked me if I was a student.*

## 3. EXCLAMATION MARK (!)

The exclamation mark is used after sentences or expressions that show strong emotions as surprise, disbelief, excitement, anger etc.

*Oh! what a house!*

*Alas! Damn you!*

*"May the devil take you!" the man shouted.*

## 4. COMMA (,)

Generally, the comma indicates a pause in the middle of a sentence. It is not a terminal mark like the full stop, question mark or exclamation mark. The following are the uses of a comma:

- i. It separates words, phrases or clauses in series, e.g.
  - a. Items recovered from the criminals by the police

- include guns, daggers, bullets, and money.
  - b. The badly damaged houses, the scores of burnt cars, and the charred remains of corpses littering the deserted streets are the ugly evidence of yesterday's riot.
  - c. The kind old woman brought out a packet of sweets, gave one sweet to each child, unwrapped one for herself, and put it into her mouth.
- ii. A comma marks off an adverbial clause or a long introductory phrase at the beginning of a sentence.
- a. When this struggle is over, we shall rejoice.
  - b. In a corner of her dimly lit room, Mgborie hid the wrap of money from her sales at the market that day.
  - c. In spite of all the efforts the Federal Government has made to shore up the value of the naira, it has remained weak against the major currencies.
- iii. To mark off introductory transitional expressions, interjections and yes or no at the beginning of sentences.
- a. Indeed, you deserve a prize.
  - b. Well, I can lend you some money.
  - c. Oh, I like that!
  - d. Yes, the exam is tomorrow.
  - e. No, don't do that.



- iv. To mark off a participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence.
  - a. Having gathered all the necessary material for the research paper, John started the preliminary write up.
  - b. Applauded by the thousands of spectators, Okocha dazzled all with his intricate dribbles.
- v. To mark off a vocative (someone addressed);
  - a. Kelechi, take your food from the fridge.
  - b. You've abused the privilege I gave you, Amaka.
  - c. Ladies and gentlemen, may we drink to the health of the bride and bridegroom.
  - d. It is our honour, Mr President, to welcome you to our state.
- vi. To mark off the introductory phrase of a direct speech:
  - a. The man said, "Please give me some money."
  - b. "I don't have any money," the woman replied.
- vii. A pair of commas is used to mark off nouns in apposition, a parenthetical element and a non-defining relative clause:
  - a. The largest country in Africa, Nigeria, has a population of 140 million.
  - b. The victim, a second-year student of a neighbouring university, was abducted from her room.
  - c. Nigeria, which is the largest country in Africa,

produces petroleum.

- viii. The comma is also used to separate items in dates, addresses and geographical names:

*He was born on Friday, 4 April, 1981.*

*The man lives at 104 Ekwem Close, Amakohia, Owerri.*

*The factory is located at Umuokwe village, Ehime Mbano Local Government Area, Imo State.*

- ix. The comma separates a tag from the main sentence:

*You're coming, aren't you?*

*He has traveled to Europe, hasn't he?*

## 5. QUOTATION MARKS (INVERTED COMMAS) (" ") OR (‘ ’)

The quotation marks (also called inverted commas) have the following uses:

- i. To enclose the direct speech of a speaker or writer when we are quoting him:

The girl shouted, "I feel wonderful to have won."

Single quotation marks are used to enclose a quotation within a quotation:

John Dubem writes in his recent book, "I totally agree with Shakerspeare when he says: 'There is no art to find the mind's construction in the face' "(quotation within a quotation).

- ii. To enclose the titles of short stories, essays, short poems, songs, episodes of a radio or television series, articles in journals or newspapers, subheadings in a book, etc.:

One of Achebe's short stories is entitled "Mad man".

Note that titles of books, journals, magazines, newspapers are underlined (if handwritten) or printed in italics:

- iii. To enclose words used in a way that is not ordinary, especially when the word now has an ironical meaning:

*Can Nigeria ever have such a "saint" as General Abacha rule her once more?*

- iv. To enclose a word or phrase quoted from a text:  
The word "hovels" used in the passage refers to dilapidated buildings.

## 6. APOSTROPHE ( ' )

The apostrophe is used for the following:

- (i) To indicate the possessive form of nouns and indefinite pronouns:

- a. the boy's father (singular)
- b. the boys' fathers (plural)
- c. a man's wife (singular)
- d. men's wives (plural)
- e. somebody's car
- f. one's decision

(ii) To indicate omissions in contracted words or numerals: can't he'll o'clock (of the clock)

(iii) To form the plural of letters (especially the small letters) and abbreviations followed by full stops.:

- a. Cross your t's and dot your i's.
- b. The number of Ph.D.'s produced so far is encouraging.

## 7. SEMI-COLON (;)

The semi-colon is used for the following:

i. It can be used to join two closely related main clauses without using a coordinating conjunction:

- a. *She dropped out of school; there was no other choice after her father's death.*
- b. *We don't just eat to live; we derive immense pleasure from eating.*

i. It is used to separate items in a series when the items themselves contain commas.:

*The company needs to recruit a graduate of marketing, economics, or business administration for the post of marketing officer; a graduate of mass communication, sociology, or any of the arts for the post of public relations officer; and a graduate of accountancy, business administration, or banking and finance for the post of accounts officer.*

## 8. COLON ( : )

The uses of the colon are:

- i. To introduce what follows it such as items in a series, a quotation, a summary etc.
  - a. The items required for the examination are: a HB pencil, an eraser, a ball-point pen, a ruler, and a log book.
  - b. Adibe in his article wrote: "The multiplicity of indigenous languages in Nigeria has given the English language a great impetus to act as a bridge."
  - c. So we can say that the entire lecture can be summed up as: the Central Bank of Nigeria has the key to the overall growth and diversification of the economy.
- ii. The colon is also used to separate figures in Bible quotations, time references, titles and subtitles:
  - a. *The Bible reading was taken from Luke 6:21.*
  - b. *The bus will arrive by 9:30 A.M.*
  - c. *The title of Prof. Obi's latest book is Ethical Revolution in Nigeria: the war against corruption.*

## 9. DASH ( — )

The uses of the dash are:

- i) To enclose a parenthetical element (an additional comment that is not an essential part of the sentence which only gives additional information) in a



sentence:

- a. The girl – the only child of her parents–was a very gifted child.
- b. She won an international award –the first African to ever win it.

**Note** that if the parenthetical element is in the middle of the sentence, a pair of dashes is used; but a single one is used when it is at the end of the sentence.

- ii) To indicate interruption in one's statement:  
Let me explain myself. I was saying that –

#### 10. **PARENTHESES / BRACKETS ( ) and [ ]**

The uses of parentheses / brackets include:-

- ii. To insulate parenthetical elements (as in the case of dash treated above). This is used especially when the additional comment is intrusive and the dash and comma are not enough.

*The girl (the only child of her parents) was a very gifted child.*

- iii. To enclose figures or letters used within a sentence
  - a. *The total sum realized was two thousand naira (N2000).*
  - b. *Look at section (b) of the constitution of our association.*

The square brackets are used to mark off

interpolation made by a writer when he is quoting a passage. They can also be used for parentheses within parentheses.

*Lambert writes that the atom is an indivisible particle [but this has been disproved by atomic fission].*

## 11. HYPHEN ( - )

The hyphen is used for the following:

1. To form compound words and two or more words serving as a single adjective before a noun:

a flare-up heavy-duty twenty-one.

A two-year-old child

a get-rich-fast syndrome

- ii. To join some prefixes and suffixes

ex-policeman non-interference president-elect

semi-final mid-term break

- iii. To indicate a break off of a word at the end of a line because of insufficient space:

Slow-ly walk-ed insuffi-cient

Such splitting of a word has to be along syllable junctions.

## 12. ELLIPSIS (....)

The ellipsis mark is used to indicate an omission within a quoted passage. In this case the person feels that the omitted section is not necessary:

*Adeyanju (2007:7) says of Nigerian English: "When a Nigerian speaks English..... native speakers of English have no difficulty of identifying the speaker*

*as a Nigerian because of the reflection of some structural characteristics of Nigerian languages."*

From the quoted passage the following was omitted:  
"no matter his level of education."

### **13. CAPITAL LETTERS**

The capital letter is used for the following:

- i. The first letter of the word beginning a sentence.
- ii. The first letter of proper nouns and titles:  
*John, Federal University of Technology, Owerri,  
Monday, November, River Niger, Chief Maduekwe,  
etc.*
- iii. The first person singular pronoun:  
*Nkechi insisted that I should come.*
- iv. In abbreviations:  
ECOWAS, FUTO, WHO, NAFDAC
- v. At the beginning of quotations:  
*The man said, "The car is new".*

### **5.8 SPELLING GUIDE**

A writer's ability to spell words correctly contributes to effective writing. Inability to write the correct spelling of a word can sometimes hinder a reader's understanding of the actual word meant. For students to master the spelling of words, they need to be avid readers. The more a person reads the more the spellings register in his memory. The dictionary is also useful in mastering the spelling of words. Students are encouraged to look up

the correct spelling of words if they are in doubt when they write.

Let us consider a few tips that should guide learners of English in their spelling of words.

1 Some words are often misspelled because they are relatively long. The tendency is to omit certain letters (especially double letters), add some non-existent letters, or transpose some letters.

accommodate  
announcement  
accidentally  
apology  
absence  
arguing  
across  
argument  
address  
adolescent  
advice (noun)  
to advise (verb)  
alcohol  
all right  
bureaucracy  
calendar  
conceive  
condemn  
conscience

continuous  
courteous  
courtesy  
curtsy / curtsey  
deceive  
dormitory  
disastrous  
empty  
everything  
exaggerate  
excellent  
explanation  
fascinate  
February  
foreign  
fulfill  
ghost  
grammar  
guaranteed

guard	quite
guide	quiet
guidance	restaurant
guerrilla	release
harass	realize
height	receive
hypocrite	rehearsal
leisure	relief
lenient	restaurant
occurrence	roommate
optimism	saxophone
possession	separate
precede	sincerely
principle	souvenir
principal	strength
privilege	their
pronunciation	there
pronounce	theirs
prophecy (noun)	tobacco
prophecy (verb)	

2 Some words are often confused and substituted for each other. These include the following:

affect, effect,  
 advice, advise  
 born, borne  
 breath, breathe  
 choose, chose  
 clothes, cloth



complement, compliment  
conscience, conscious  
dyeing, dying  
envelop, envelope  
formerly, formally  
its, it's  
giving, given  
being, been  
later, latter  
lose, loose  
maybe, may be  
moral, morale  
principle, principal  
stationary, stationery  
weather, whether

3. Some words require some changes made to them before adding suffixes, e.g.

i. Unpronounced final e is usually dropped before adding a suffix beginning with a vowel, e.g.

blame – blaming      like – liking

tribe – tribal      arrive – arrival

fame – famous      voice – voicing etc.

(exceptions: mileage, hoe-hoeing, like – likeable etc.)

ii. Unpronounced final e is retained before adding a suffix beginning with a consonant, e.g.

blame – blameless

dense – densely

hope – hopeful	bake - bakery
manage – management	safe – safety etc.

(Exceptions: true-truly, argue – argument etc.)

iii. Some words double the last letter before adding a suffix, e.g.

stop – stopped	begin – beginning
bit – bitten	fat – fattest
regret – regrettable	man – manned
admit – admitted	slip – slipped
travel – travelled (BrE)	ship – shipped etc.

**Note:** Some words have varied British English (BrE) and American English (AmE) spellings. Both of them are standard. However, one should be consistent in the use of either. Such spellings include the following:

### BrE

travelled  
controlling  
centre  
litre  
theatre  
colour  
labour  
mummy  
mum  
manoeuvre

### AmE

traveled  
controlling  
center  
liter  
theater  
color  
labor  
mommy  
mom  
maneuver

## EXERCISES

1. Punctuate the following passages:
  - i) I have occupied the highest position any man can desire in this country after that il said I was going to use everything to serve god though i am older than the man of god I am ready to be an apprentice understudy, under his ministry the spirit of god is on josua that is why miracles are taking place what we see here is the fulfilment of the scripture of jesus christ I am going to live a holy life for him.  
**(Tell, December 24, 2007 p. 31)**
  - ii) Under fire super eagles coach Berti Vogts has refused to cede his prerogative to pick the team to disappointed fans the german has scoffed at suggestions that he got his team selection for the Ivory Coast wrong during the post match press conference Vogts endured sustained criticisms by Nigerian journalists who wanted him to admit that he made a mistake but the former germany and Scotland coach would have none of it I am in charge of the team and I determine who plays and who does not play said the german.
2. The following words are wrongly spelt. Write them correctly.

i) previledge	ii) recieve	iii) pronounciation
iv) greatful	v) arguement	vi) onomatopia
vii) grammer	viii) urgly	ix) embaras
x) endeavour	xi) Comitee	



## *Chapter Six*

### **COMMON ERRORS IN ENGLISH USAGE**

*By Uchenna D. Uwakwe*

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Errors in the English Language usage are very common especially in countries where English has been adopted as a second language. In most of such countries, English is used as the official language. Effective communication has been hampered by the prevalence of errors. This problem has been made more complex by the fact that varieties of the English Language have sprung in different areas where existing languages come in contact with the English language. What is viewed today as Nigerian English is the collection of the misapplication of the use of the English language in different tribes that make up the nation, Nigeria.

Error is a consistent deviation from the norm especially in speaking or writing. It usually causes serious problems in communications. Apart from the fact that meaning is blurred by incessant errors in English usage, the dignity of the speaker suffers a big loss. For the student, marks are substantially lost because the teacher is often enjoined to mark on impression. When clichés are thrown into sentences with reckless abandon, the examiner may not be confused by such intrusions rather they breed a feeling of disgust and total disaffection.

Generally, errors are clear manifestations of the

language user's ignorance. Inapt expressions do not convey exactly meanings intended by the user of the language. While the proficient user appreciates these aberrations, the untutored may just receive the information as they are used. When such expressions are tied to wrong meanings they are as embarrassing as they are confusing to both the speaker and listener.

Errors are found in all the levels of language. A careful study of errors in English usage is another method of pursuing the basic requirements of the English language course. This chapter presents some of the errors as they are often used. Corrections are also given side by side each of them.

There is a focus here on; wrong use of the parts of speech, incorrect use of plurals, violation of the rules of concord, faulty choice of words and misapplied expressions. There is also an outline of often confused words.

## 6.2 WRONG USE OF PLURALS CORRECTIONS

- |    |  |   |                                    |
|----|--|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. | My principal gives us<br>good <b>advices</b>           | - | <b>advice</b>                      |
| 2. | My troop has sufficient<br>arms and <b>ammunitions</b> | - | <b>ammunition</b>                  |
| 3. | I hate their <b>behaviours</b>                         | - | <b>behaviour</b>                   |
| 4. | He gave me some <b>chalks</b>                          | - | <b>(pieces of<br/>chalk) chalk</b> |
| 5. | We have enough <b>cutleries</b>                        |   |                                    |



- |     |  |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|
|     | for everybody  | - | cutlery                                   |
| 6.  | The school has some good laboratory <b>equipments</b>          | - | equipment                                 |
| 7.  | Chief Amadi is one of the <b>elites</b> in our state           | - | elite                                     |
| 8.  | Dan bought some new <b>furnitures</b>                          | - | furniture                                 |
| 9.  | We have a lot of <b>foods</b> in the store                     | - | food                                      |
| 10. | He got all his <b>gratuities</b> at once                       | - | gratuity                                  |
| 11. | The accountant has done a lot of <b>harms</b> to our resources | - | harm                                      |
| 12. | The <b>informations</b> are wrong                              | - | information is (or pieces of Information) |
| 13. | The beauty queen used her mothers <b>jewelries.</b>            | - | jewelry                                   |
| 14. | We have some <b>lands</b> for sale                             | - | plots of land, pieces of land             |
| 15. | The government is expecting <b>moneys</b> from oil and gas     | - | money                                     |
| 16. | He has not returned my <b>manuscripts</b> to me.               | - | manuscript                                |

The errors in the examples above occur as a result of the addition of plural markers to words that are not pluralized even when they are meant to express plurality. Other words in this category include **accommodation, blame, dust, fun, bread, female, arithmetic, scenery, luggage, personnel, slang, stationary, staff, army, executive, vocabulary, beard, enemy, cattle, wire, hair, brick, etc.** It is important **to note** that most of the words that occur in this group are collective nouns that do not require plural markers. However, there are certain nouns that can also take plural markers for the purpose of reflecting entirely different ideas e.g. damage. The crash gave that car a lot of damage. Damage, when used to denote destruction does not take a plural marker but "damages" is used to reflect legal claim, an insult or harm done to a person or thing respectively. Eg. The driver sued the police for damages. Eg. My boss has repaired the damage done to his car by his driver.

### **CORRECTIONS:**

They wasted great deal of time	<b>a great</b>
Our match came to end at six	<b>an end</b>
The team traveled by seven o'clock bus	<b>the seven</b>
Saviola hit me by leg	<b>the leg</b>
The girl called her boyfriend fool	<b>a fool</b>
We really need such book to prepare well	<b>a book</b>
We are visiting the family of late Mr. Amanze	<b>the late</b>
The old man has faced series of problems this year	<b>a series</b>

### 6.3 WRONG ADDITION OF ARTICLES

The articles in bold form in these sentences are unnecessary.

The executive was given **a** credit for the peace in the association.

When the article "a" is added to the word credit, it denotes a financial assistance/facility, e.g.,  
The proposal will enable us secure a credit from the bank.

The lecturer traveled overseas to do **an** academic work.

The servant didn't receive **a** fair treatment from his master.

The clerk got **a** permission for her absence.

Bassey wants to go to **the** university next year.

The Pastor has gone to **the** church (worship)

"The" could be added to the word to signify that they are different from other church buildings. In such cases the denomination ought to be specified. "The church" can also be used to reflect that it is an organisation different from other organizations like the government, the village, the club etc. The River Niger flows across Onitsha

#### **6.4 ERROR OF AGREEMENT      CORRECTIONS**

Everything were ready before he arrived.	<b>was</b>
Every student are present for the lecture.	<b>is</b>
Neither John nor Emeka are my friends.	<b>is/friend</b>
Neither of those trees were there last year.	<b>was</b>
Each of the players receive weekly allowances.	<b>receives</b>
Me and my friends were at the party.	<b>I</b>
We were sent off by they yesterday.	<b>them</b>
Martins plays better than me.	<b>1 (play)</b>
Let Joseph and she come earlier.	<b>her</b>
Who will he give the book to.	<b>whom</b>
The student who we punished is in class.	<b>whom</b>
We approached the lecturer whom taught us.	<b>who</b>
That is the Pastor which car was stolen.	<b>whose</b>
The doctor about which we spoke has arrived.	<b>whom</b>
It is you who has annoyed him.	<b>have</b>

#### **6.5 VERBS WRONGLY USED      CORRECTIONS**

He have gone before we arrived.	<b>had</b>
Are you going to my house.	<b>coming</b>
I took a shower just now.	<b>had</b>
The Sailor's boat drowned.	<b>sank</b>
My sister did a mistake.	<b>made</b>
There is a word I need to see in the dictionary.	<b>look up</b>
Peter refused saying it.	<b>denied</b>
The dictator has arisen to power.	<b>risen</b>
A new problem rose during the conference.	<b>arose</b>

Note that arise is used for things or abstract nouns while rise is used for persons – await (abstract) wait person

We are waiting his arrival.	<b>awaiting</b>
The woman has borne twins.	<b>born</b>
My wife has delivered a girl.	<b>has been delivered</b>
	<b>of a baby girl</b>
The thief was hung yesterday.	<b>hanged</b>
Moses laid down on his bed when he became tired.	<b>lay</b>
The bell has rang again.	<b>been rung</b>
Mrs. Elkanah was able to born a child.	<b>bear</b>
The cook made me ate the food with him.	<b>eat</b>
I prefer playing than working.	<b>playing to working</b>
Solomon laughed at John instead of to encourage him.	<b>encouraging</b>
Everybody that saw what happened could not help to weep.	<b>weeping</b>
I am having his money.	<b>have</b>

## 6.6 ADJECTIVES WRONGLY USED

Maureen was her oldest daughter.	<b>eldest</b>
Betty is the youngest of the two sisters.	<b>younger</b>
My car is more preferable than yours	<b>is preferable</b>
	<b>to yours</b>
Benjamin is better than all engineers in his unit	<b>all other</b>
Between Achebe and Soyinka I prefer the first	<b>former</b>



One of his family members arrived yesterday	a member of his family
He is feeling comparatively better now	well
Our work is moving more faster than theirs	faster
Jude's uncle is stinkingly rich	stinking
My friend has become churcheous in recent times	churchy
Malachi's head is not correct	Malachy is crazy
He is a matured man (these are adjectives and so should not be used as verbs	mature
The orange is riped	ripe
We ate roasted yam	roast

## 6.7 ADVERBS WRONGLY USED

Applications are invited from suitable qualified candidates.	suitably
I am hard up now.	presently
You must work hardly to win.	hard
The weather is too hot today.	very
You are very tall for your age.	too
The host team was defeated outrightly.	outright
They have to take the job serious.	seriously
The group is moving too slow.	slowly
How do you sell you oranges.	how much

**NOTE:** "VERY" is used with a negative word and "TOO" with the positive one to indicate that something is bad.

"TOO" can also be used with a negative word but the sentence must take some more explanations e.g.  
She is too ugly to enter for the beauty pageant.

## 6.8 PREPOSITIONS WRONGLY USED

To my opinion, he is very correct.	in
He refused to put the suggestion to practice.	into
They reached to a compromise.	omit-"to"
Thomas did the job in accordance to the rule.	with
The principals action is in line to our decision.	with
Mikel Obi has started training along with Chelsea.	omit along
The student said it to my hearing.	in
Johnston is very good in geography.	at
I don't want you to shout on me like that.	at
We only asked a favour from him.	asked a favour of him
They all live in campus.	on
I am opposed with everybody in their camp.	to
You just have to act with good faith.	in
My supervisor is a professor in Geology.	of
I went to Lagos with bus.	by
Before one month, we would have finished the assignment.	Before the expiration of
I am having an examination tomorrow	I have
As many that are hungry should can come and eat.	as many as
The three sailors love	

<b>each other</b> so much.	<b>one another</b>
We divided the oranges <b>between</b> James, Peter and Phillip	
<b>Both Emeka, John and their elder brother</b> came.	<b>among</b> (delete both)
Both the Super Eagles <b>as well as</b> the Falcons qualified.	<b>and</b>
They have searched all the nook <b>and corners</b> of the school.	<b>Crannies</b>
Romeo and Juliet love <b>themselves</b> .	<b>each other</b>
James and <b>me</b> are professionals.	<b>I</b>
<b>Who</b> of them will become the governor.	<b>which</b>
Phillip and <b>myself</b> came much earlier than others.	<b>I</b>
Neither the student nor their teacher <b>are</b> around.	<b>is</b>
Who is <b>him</b> to insult me.	<b>he</b>
Nzeribe is not richer than <b>her</b> .	<b>she</b>
Johnson and his younger sister have not seen <b>themselves</b> since last week.	<b>each other</b>
In our team we share things with <b>each other</b> .	<b>one another</b>
The driver <b>who</b> we employed is here now.	<b>whom</b>
One should be ready for what <b>he</b> wants in life.	<b>one</b>
The case is <b>their's</b> not mine.	<b>theirs</b>

## 6.9 WRONG SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION

Please <b>borrow</b> me your pen	<b>lend</b>
He thinks I <b>jealous</b> him	<b>envy</b>
Driver, I will <b>come down</b> at the bus stop	<b>alight</b>
Applications are requested	

from **suitable** qualified persons.  
I saw him **collecting** the prize.  
Maria **senior**ed the twins.  
The manager is **not on seat**.  
I was not **opportuned** to see the king.

**suitably**  
**collect**  
**is senior to**  
**not available**  
**did not**  
**have the**  
**opportunity**

You just said you are getting  
tired? **Likewise me**.

**so I am**  
**are supposed**

You **suppose** to be here earlier.

Professor Thompson is a  
seasoned **Academician**

**Academic**  
**used to**

Okocha **use** to play food ball everyday.  
(for past habitual action)

Sleeping in an air conditioned room  
is not **conducive**.

**agreeable to my**  
**health**

He is the one who has **being**  
disturbing the class.

I **answer** Victor Ikpeba.

We enjoyed the **sweet** rice.

**been**  
**am called**  
**delicious/tasty**

I **forgot** my car key on the bed.

Stephen's wife has **taken in**.

**left**  
**conceived**

**Upon everything** I did he did not respond.

**In spite of**

I am only telling you **should incase**  
you meet him.

**in case**  
**off hand**

We attempted the questions **off head**.

## 6.10 Words Commonly Confused

These Words are often confused and misused. Study them, using a good dictionary to ascertain their correct usage.

Aggravate, irritate

Agree to, agree with

Although, though

Amount, number

Anticipate, expect

Anxious, eager

Bad, badly

Burst, bust, busted

Ecology, environment

Fewer, less, imply, infer

Irregardless, disregardless

Kind, sort, type

Median, mean, average

Preceding, previous

Raise, rise

Real, really

Shall, will

Ability, capability

Accept, except

Adapt, adept, adopt

Adjoin, adjourn

Advice, advise

Affect, effect

Allay, ally

All right, alright



All together, altogether  
Allude, elude  
Allusion, illusion  
Amiable, amicable  
Appraise, apprise  
Arms, alms  
Assay, essay  
Averse, adverse  
Awhile, a while  
Bases, basis  
Beau, bough, bow  
Beside, besides  
Biannual, biennial  
Capital, capitol  
Casual, causal  
Censor, censure  
Chartered, charter  
Clench, clinch  
Click, clique  
Climactic, climatic  
Complement, compliment  
Confidant, confident  
Continual, continuous  
Credible, creditable, credulous  
Decree, degree  
Defer, differ  
Desert, dessert  
Desolate, dissolute  
Disburse, disperse

Discomfit, discomfort  
Distract, detract  
Elicit, illicit  
Emigrate, immigrate  
Ensure, insure  
Equable, equitable  
Errand, errant  
Exalt, exult  
Extant, extent  
Farther, further  
Flout, flaunt  
Formally, formerly  
Hallow, hollow  
Hospitable, hospital  
Incredible, incredulous  
Inequity, iniquity  
Ingenious, ingenuous  
Intense, intents  
Interstate, intrastate  
Key, quay, cay  
Lesser, lessor  
Loath, loathe  
Ordinance, ordnance  
Personal, personnel  
Practicable, practical  
Prescribe, proscribe  
Pretext, pretense  
Principal, principle  
Respectfully, respectively

Speciality, specialty

Tenant, tenet

Tortuous, torturous

Track tract

Waive, wave

Weather, whether

Wet, whet

Whither, wither

## EXERCISES

1. Correct the following sentences
  - i. They are now on holiday
  - ii. She puts on eye-glasses.
  - iii. We shall discuss it tomorrow
  - iv. The storm caused a great damage.
  - v. Majority of them are boys.
  - vi. This will result to a big loss.
  - vii. I have a good news for you.
  - viii. This is a child's play.
  - ix. You must have to do it.
  - x. I have Gold.



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