

Chapter 16

Morphology and Syntax

Engl 423

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Parts of Speech: Positional Classes

Parts of speech has a great importance in the language. Not knowing the part of speech of a word may cause **ambiguity**

E.g.

They are helping people

Not knowing the part of speech of the word **helping** here gives two possible meanings to the sentence:

1- They help people. **(verb)**

2- Those people are helping. **(adjectival)**

Schematic overview of the parts of speech

Form classes:

- Large and open class.
- Admitting new members.
- Based on changes in form that word can undergo.

A- Noun

B- Verb

C- Adjective

D- Adverb

Schematic overview of the parts of speech

Structure classes:

- Small and closed classes.
- Rarely admitting new members.
- Members of these classes are normally uninflected.
- They are recognized by position only.

A- Determiners

B- Personal pronouns

C- Auxiliaries

D- Qualifiers

E- Prepositions

F- Expletive

G- Restrictor

H- Predeterminer

I- Postdeterminer

J- Subordinating conjunction

K- Coordinating conjunction

L- Relative

Schematic overview of the parts of speech

Positional classes:

- Based on positions occupied by the form classes.
- Members of these classes are both words and word groups.

A- Nominal

B- Verbal

C- Adjectival

D- Adverbial

Nominals

Certain sentence positions are characteristically the habitation of nouns. These positions are those occupied by items having these functions:

Subj → Subject of verb

IO → Indirect object of verb

SC → Subjective complement

OC → Objective complement

DO → Direct object of verb

OP → Object of preposition

HOWEVER, other form classes can occupy them as well

E.g. Pattern 3: The smart pass the exam → adjective because it can be inflected with –er and –est.

Pattern 2: Accurately is the fastest way to work → Adverb (accurate + ly)

Pattern 4: Walking helps in losing weight. → a verb stem + {-ING vb}.

Walking here cannot be noun because:

1- it cannot take a noun inflection.

2- it does not contain a noun-forming derivation suffix.

So, to solve this problem, the positional classes were set up. Any word, regardless its form class (noun, verb, adjective, adverb) will be tabbed a nominal if it occupies one of the six positions listed above.

Nominals

Nominals can be individual words or word groups.

E.g.

About a plateful is my limit.

This can be tested by substitution. A word group is a nominal if it can be substituted by one of these: a noun or a noun phrase, this, that, these, those, he/him, she/her, it, they/them.

Verbals

Verbals are those forms that occupy verb positions. The verbal position is that of the main verb. It comes after the opening NP slot.

In order to identify the verbal positions, it is important to distinguish between two main kinds of verb forms:

1- Finite verbs: Verbs that are capable of full assertion in a sentence and of changing their form to indicate person, number, and tense. **E.g.**

I walk to school	Contrastive inflection for person
She walks to school	
She walks to school	Contrastive inflection for number
They walk to school	
They walk to school	Contrastive inflection for tense
They walked to school	

Verbals

In order to identify the verbal positions, it is important to distinguish between two main kinds of verb forms:

2- Nonfinite verbs: Verbs that do not assert fully and do not change their form to indicate person, number, and tense. There are three nonfinite verb forms; the present participle {-ING vb}, the past participle {-D pp}, and the infinitive (to) + verb stem. **E.g.**

Being upset	Present participle.
The rain falling on the floor	
Having stayed calm	Past participle
The guide having disappeared	
To stop this nonsense.	Infinitive (to) + verb stem
His cousin to come	

Adjectivals

Adjectivals, like verbals and nominals, occupy specific positions. These positions are:

1- That between the determiner and nouns.

E.g. The comfortable bed → adjective

The history book → noun

The interesting movie → verb

The inside thoughts → adverb

2- The third slot in pattern 2.

E.g. The students are clever → adjective

The students are in → adverb

The students are in hurry → word group

Adjectivals

Adjectivals, like verbals and nominals, occupy specific positions. These positions are:

3- After the noun (it can be adjectives, adverbs, verbs, non-suffixing words, and word groups).

E.g. The girl, tall and slim, came to your office → adjective

The girl reading came to your office → verb

The girl inside came to your office → adjective

In this postnominal position we find word-group adjectivals of different structure, such as: infinitive, relative clause, reduced relative clause, prepositional phrase, and modified adjectives.

4- In written English, at the beginning of the sentence before the subject.

E.g. Angry and upset, he slammed the door.

5- Words composed of any-, every-, no-, or some-, plus body, one, place, or thing can be followed by adjectivals.

E.g. Nothing important was said.

Adverbials

Adverbials are considered the most difficulty is that there are numerous subclasses of one-word adverbials, and each subclass has its own positions in the various sentence patterns.

E.g.

He **soon** will play tennis

He will **soon** play tennis

He will play tennis **soon**

So it is not easy to determine the position of the adverbial.

Adverbials

There are five common adverbial positions:

1- Before the pattern, with or without juncture

E.g. Really, is that what you meant?

2- After the subject and before the auxiliary or verb

E.g. She always visits her grandmother.

3- After the auxiliary or the first auxiliary

E.g. He could definitely do it

4- After the verb in pattern 1 and after be in pattern 2 and 3

E.g. He drives fast

Her father is a policeman

5- After the complement of the verb (SC, DO, OC)

E.g. He will come back tomorrow

Adverbials

As mentioned above, any form class can be adverbial since we are dealing with positional class.

Noun → He will come **Sunday**

Verb → They stood **eating**

Adjective → They played **dirty**

Adverb → Come **quickly**

Types of adverbs:

- 1- Non-suffixing words, such as below, behind, between
- 2- "-ward" series, such as afterward, backward
- 3- "Here" series, such as hereafter, hereby
- 4- "There" series, such as thereby, therefore
- 5- "-where" series, such as anywhere, nowhere
- 6- "-way" series, such as noway, anyway
- 7- "-time" series, such as meantime, anytime
- 8- Miscellaneous, such as today, tonight

This is all for today

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK 😊