

# COURSE TITLE: SYNTAX

WEEK 3: ENGLISH PHRASES

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# LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ▶ By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:
- ▶ i. Identify types of phrases
- ▶ ii. Analyze phrases into their constituent parts
- ▶ iii. Discuss the functions of phrases
- ▶ iv. Use phrases to construct correct English sentences

# Introduction

- ▶ Phrases are larger than words, smaller than clauses and sentences
- ▶ Important building blocks of language
- ▶ Various functions
- ▶ In Traditional grammar, it is only seen as a group of words
- ▶ In Modern Grammar- it can be one word or a group of words
- ▶ One word as long as it has potential for expansion, it can be a phrase
- ▶ STUDENTS- A STUDENT- THE STUDENTS- THE SUPPORTIVE STUDENTS
- ▶ THE EXTREMELY SUPPORTIVE STUDENTS- THE STUDENTS IN THE FIELD

# Introduction

- ▶ The wider use of the term ‘phrase’ to refer to a group of words or one word can be justified:
- ▶ Many rules that apply to a noun, also apply to a noun phrase
- ▶ [yoghurt/Greek yoghurt]
- ▶ Many rules that apply to an adjective phrase, apply to a noun phrase

[pleasant/very pleasant]

Instead of specifying each time ‘adjective phrase or adjective; noun phrase or noun, it simpler to say ‘adjective phrase/ noun phrase and include adjectives and nouns respectively.

Nelson, G. & Greenbaum, S. (2016). *An introduction to English Grammar*. London: Routledge.

# Introduction

- ▶ A phrase may contain other phrases/ a phrase may be embedded \
- ▶ on another.
- ▶ Some very pleasant times
- ▶ Very pleasant- adj phrase (embedded within the Noun phrase)
- ▶ In the shade of a large coconut tree.
- ▶ The shade of a large coconut tree
- ▶ The additional phrases have specific functions

# Introduction

- ▶ WORD- PHRASE- SENTENCE

sentence

Phrase

Word

# FIVE ENGLISH PHRASES

- ▶ The phrases make part of the sentence structure
- ▶ A sentence can have all or some of the phrases
- ▶ There are five phrases
- ▶ Named after the five open/ lexical word classes

Noun phrase  
(NP)

Verb phrase  
(VP)

Adjective  
phrase  
(ADJPH)

Adverb phrase  
(ADVPH)

Prepositional  
phrase (PP)

# NOUN PHRASE

Structure of the noun phrase

The main/head word is the noun or a pronoun.

The structure may be presented schematically as:

NOTE: What is in parenthesis indicates elements that are optional.

(determiners)	(pre-modifiers)	noun	(post-modifiers)
a	new	edition	of the book
some	large	sheets	of paper
the	old	man	who lives near
Those	courageous	students	presenting their work

# The structure of the noun phrase

- ▶ The **determiner** function is achieved by the determinatives such **as the, a, those, some.**
- ▶ They introduce noun phrases.
- ▶ Modifiers are units that are dependent on the main word, and can be omitted.
- ▶ Pre-modifiers- come before the noun (Head)
- ▶ Post-modifiers - come after the noun (Head)

# Examples

- ▶ Men head
- ▶ Those men det + head
- ▶ Those popular men det +pre-mod +head
- ▶ Some popular men det+pre-mod +head
- ▶ Men in the function head+ post-mod
- ▶ Some men in the function det +head+post-mod
- ▶ Popular men in the function pre-mod +head+ post-mod
- ▶ Some popular men in the function det+pre-mod +head+ post-mod

# Determiners

- ▶ Pre-determiners - all, both, half, double
- ▶ Occur only before articles or demonstratives
- ▶ Since they are quantifiers themselves, they do not occur with the following quantifiers ( every, either, some, any, no, enough,
- ▶ Central determiners - a, an, the, those
- ▶ Post-determiners - cardinal numbers, ordinal numbers, general ordinals
- ▶ other, two, first
- ▶ They follow determiners but precede the adjectives in the pre-modification structure

# Modifiers

- ▶ Consider the following examples:
- ▶ **A long cold weather**
- ▶ **Acute, life-threatening ailments**
- ▶ **A nasty gash on his chin which needed medical attention**
- ▶ **The easiest children to teach** - discontinuous
- ▶ Identify the parts of these NPs
- ▶ Can you see pre-modifiers?
- ▶ How about post- modifiers?
- ▶ Locate them in these phrases.

# Premodifiers

- ▶ The pre-modifier function is achieved majorly by use of adjectives
- ▶ Arrogant men, kind people
- ▶ They can also be achieved by other nouns;
- ▶ The suez canal, the Washington Post, the Cambridge College of Arts
- ▶ The River Thames

# POST-MODIFICATION

- ▶ Post modifiers are represented by various forms:
- ▶ Relative clauses:
  - ▶ *She has a boyfriend who is very jealousy.*
  - ▶ The relative clause is embedded in the Noun Phrase.
  - ▶ As an independent sentence, it may be:
    - ▶ *Her boyfriend is very jealousy.*
    - ▶ *The woman who was sitting next to you is a doctor.*
    - ▶ *The woman is a doctor. The woman was sitting next to you.*

# Post-modification

- ▶ Prepositional phrase
- ▶ The children **in the car**
- ▶ **As a full sentence, it is: The children are in the car**
- ▶ Those many books **on the shelf.**
- ▶ Those **books are on the shelf.**

Give examples from your environment.

# Post-modification

- ▶ Appositive clauses
- ▶ Appositive clauses are introduced by the conjunction ‘that...’
- ▶ The assumption that all men are arrogant....
- ▶ He had a big wound that threatened his comfort
- ▶ Apposition is a relationship between two noun phrases which have identical reference (Nelson & Greenbaum, 2016)
- ▶ Kamara Harris, the Democrat...
- ▶ Donald Trump, the Republican...

Nelson, G. & Greenbaum, S. (2016). *An introduction to English grammar*. London: Routledge.

# Adjectives as post modifiers

- ▶ Adjectives can also be used as noun post modifiers.
- ▶ You can use the resources available.
- ▶ You should choose someone reliable.
- ▶ I need something cool today.
- ▶ Other examples (Quirk, et.al, 1973)
- ▶ Attorney general / Notary public
- ▶ The weapons involved / The people responsible.

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G. & Svartvik, S. (1973). *A University Grammar of English*. UK: Longman.

# FUNCTIONS OF THE NOUN PHRASE

FUNCTION	EXAMPLE
SUBJECT	The Kenyan youth protested viciously.
DIRECT OBJECT	They visited the children.
INDIRECT OBJECT	He gave me a beautiful handbag.
SUBJECT COMPLEMENT	The teacher is an honest person.
OBJECT COMPLEMENT	Many of us consider him the best candidate.
COMPLEMENT OF A PREPOSITION	In a house
Pre-modifier of NP	Milk production is down this year; back problems
ADVERBIAL	The term finishes next week; You will not succeed that way

# THE VERB PHRASE

## ▶ STRUCTURE

▶ Main verb preceded optionally by a maximum of four auxiliary verbs.

▶ The four include

▶ Modal	perfect	progressive	passive	main
▶ Might		be		studying
▶ Could	have	been		injured
▶ May	have	been	being	arrested.

# FUNCTIONS OF THE VERB PHRASE

- ▶ TENSE, NUMBER AND PERSON
- ▶ A grammatical category referring to time of the situation.
- ▶ Tense is indicated by the form 'be'
- ▶ Past and present, when considering the morphological marking.
- ▶ Number- singular and plural
- ▶ The subject and the verb must agree (Concord)
- ▶ Person and subject are related, determine the verb selected.

# FUNCTIONS OF THE VERB PHRASE

## ▶ ASPECT

- ▶ Aspect is a grammatical category referring to the way in which a situation is viewed by the speaker/ writer.
- ▶ Aspect is expressed by a combination of auxiliary and verb form.
- ▶ Two aspects:
  - ▶ The perfect- the situation has been completed
    - ▶ They have impeached their leader.
  - ▶ The progressive- situation in progress
    - ▶ They are impeaching their leader.

# FUNCTIONS OF THE VERB PHRASE

## ▶ VOICE

- ▶ Transitive verbs have two voices: active and passive
- ▶ The active is the most common
- ▶ The active and the passive have different phrases - the passive has an additional auxiliary; a form of auxiliary 'be' followed by an -ed participle.
- ▶ The DO or IO of the active sentence becomes the subject of the corresponding passive sentence.
- ▶ A team of detectives is investigating the crime.
- ▶ The crime is being investigated by a team of detectives.

# FUNCTIONS OF THE VERB PHRASE

## ▶ EXPRESSING FUTURE TIME

- ▶ 1. Simple present tense - He washes me with a super soap.
- ▶ 2. use of auxiliaries 'will' or 'shall'.
- ▶ Use of the semi-auxiliary 'going to' and the present progressive.
- ▶ I am going to read the novel during my flight.
- ▶ Arsenal are playing with Man-United next week.

# Functions of the verb phrase

- ▶ MOOD
- ▶ distinctions in the verb that express the attitude of the speaker to what is said.
- ▶ Finite verb phrases have three moods;
- ▶ Indicative
- ▶ Imperative
- ▶ Subjunctive

# MOOD

- ▶ INDICATIVE- Used in declarative, interrogative and exclamative sentences.
- ▶ The music is interesting.
- ▶ Is the music interesting?
- ▶ How interesting the music is
- ▶ IMPERATIVE - uses the base form-
- ▶ Go out now.
- ▶ Acts as a directive to request action

# MOOD

- ▶ SUBJUNCTIVE- expresses wishes and suppositions
- ▶ **Mandative subjunctive** uses the base form.
- ▶ **He insists that I walk fast.**
- ▶ **I move that the meeting not be adjourned.**
- ▶ The **were subjunctive** is so called because it uses the verb were.
- ▶ **If he were appointed, I would resign immediately.**
- ▶ **I wish I were there.**

# THE ADJECTIVE PHRASE

- ▶ THE STRUCTURE

- ▶ The main word is the adjective

- ▶ The structure is represented below; the elements in parentheses are optional.

- ▶ (pre-modifier)                      adjective                                      (post-modifier)

- ▶                                      clean

- ▶ Very                                      clean

- ▶ Very                                      clean                                      for the day

# Possible structures

Structure	Example
ADJECTIVE	Quiet
Pre-modifier+adjective	Very quiet
Adjective + post modifier	Quiet for someone in his position
Pre-modifier+adjective+ post-modifier	Too quiet to lead a vibrant group

# MODIFIERS

- ▶ Optional
- ▶ They qualify in some respect what is denoted by the adjective.
- ▶ Some post-modifiers complete what is implied in the meaning of the adjective.
- ▶ Consider these
- ▶ He is afraid of snakes.
- ▶ He is afraid for his job.
- ▶ He is afraid to say anything.
- ▶ He is afraid that no one will visit him.

# ADJECTIVE COMPLEMENTS

- ▶ Some adjectives take what may be called ‘obligatory post-modifiers’
- ▶ They must be used with structures after them to complete their meaning.
- ▶ She is fond of her children
- ▶ I am aware that he is arriving today.
- ▶ This contract is subject to approval.

# FUNCTIONS OF THE ADJECTIVE PHRASE

- ▶ Pre-modifier in a noun phrase- a tall man
- ▶ Subject complement- The students were very cooperative.
- ▶ Object complement- The considered him reliable.
- ▶ Post- modifier in a noun phrase- I bought something expensive / the memory available/ the court martial/
- ▶ Heads of a noun phrase- the best is yet to come, the sick require medical attention

# Predicative and attributive uses

- ▶ Attributive- used to pre-modify nouns
- ▶ He is a good person.
- ▶ Predicative- used a part of the predicate as:
- ▶ Subject complement- The delegates are responsible for all the decisions.
- ▶ Object complement- they considered the delegates responsible.

# ADVERB PHRASE

- ▶ STRUCTURE

- ▶ The main word is the adverb

- ▶ (pre-modifier)

adverb  
surprisingly

(post-modifier)

- ▶ Very

surprisingly

- ▶ Very

surprisingly indeed

# FUNCTIONS

- ▶ 1. Modifier of an adjective or adverb in respective phrases
- ▶ The description was surprisingly accurate.
- ▶ The project was terminated somewhat prematurely.
- ▶ Semantically, most of the modifiers are intensifiers.
- ▶ They express the degree to which the meaning of the adjective or adverb applies on an assumed scale. *Very* is the most common intensifier.
- ▶ Modifier of preposition phrase- the nail went right through his head.
- ▶ Modifier of noun phrase- it was rather a mess/ he was quite some player/
- ▶ Complement of the preposition- down here

# Functions

- ▶ Adverbial in the sentence structure:

Adjuncts/ disjuncts

- ▶ Suddenly, the patient started to shake uncontrollably.
- ▶ Fortunately, he escaped unhurt.
- ▶ They can also be used as conjuncts to link clauses-
- ▶ The students were not prepared for the test; consequently, they performed poorly.

# The preposition phrase

- ▶ STRUCTURE
- ▶ PREPOSITION + COMPLEMENT-at the cinema
- ▶ PREMODIFIER + PREP\_COMPLENT- just before dinner
- ▶ The element following the preposition is Called a complement because, unlike a post-modifier, it is not optional.
- ▶ Complements
  - ▶ noun phrase- through the window
  - ▶ Nominal relative clause- from what I know...
  - ▶ -ing clause- after speaking to you...

# FUNCTIONS

- ▶ 1. Post-modifier of a noun-
  - ▶ I took several courses in Linguistics.
- ▶ 2. post- modifier of an adjective-
  - ▶ They were aware of his addiction.
- ▶ 3. adverbial-
  - ▶ After the protest, taxation became a sensitive matter.
  - ▶ In my view, the meeting was not fruitful.

# Summary

- ▶ We have looked at the phrases
- ▶ Five of them: NP, ADJPH, ADVPH, VP, PP
- ▶ Structure
- ▶ Functions
- ▶ NP- detailed structure.
- ▶ Knowledge of phrases -helps to improve our expression, also prepares us for linguistic analysis.

# References

- ▶ Nelson, G. & Greenbaum, S. (2016). *An introduction to English grammar*. London: Routledge.
- ▶ Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G. & Svartvik, S. (1973). *A University Grammar of English*. UK: Longman.

# Next lesson

- ▶ In our next class, we shall be looking at clauses.