

What's in a sentence?

The mobile phone

Manuela is a teacher. She lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Last week she was presented with a 'Teacher of the Year' award by the director of her school. The prize was some money and some flowers.

Manuela teaches teenagers at a large secondary school and at the weekends she gives private English classes. She is married to a man she met when she was skiing in Bariloche. Bariloche is a famous ski resort in Argentina.

Yesterday was Manuela's wedding anniversary. In the morning her husband gave her a beautiful necklace. She was very happy. She cried! She gave him a new mobile phone. He thanked her enthusiastically, even though he had bought himself the same phone the previous day. He wonders when he will tell her, but he thinks today is not the right time.



Parts of speech

- In the story about Manuela there are quite a few **NOUNS**, such as *Manuela*, *Buenos Aires*, *Bariloche*, *teacher*, *school*, *husband* and *award*. Nouns are the names of people, places or things. We look at nouns in →12.
- There are also **PRONOUNS** (which take the place of nouns), such as *she*, *he* and *her*. We look at pronouns in →12.
- The **ADJECTIVES** in the text include *famous*, *beautiful* and *happy*. Adjectives describe nouns. We look at adjectives in →15.
- The text above also has a number of **VERBS** (which describe actions, states and events), such as *is*, *lives*, *was awarded*, *teaches*, *gave*, *had bought*, etc. We look at verbs in →4.
- The word *enthusiastically* is an **ADVERB** (it describes the verb); there are **ADVERBIAL PHRASES** in the text, too, such as *last week* and *in the morning*. We look at adverbs in →11.
- There are two **ARTICLES** in the text: the **INDEFINITE ARTICLE** *a* and the **DEFINITE ARTICLE** *the*. The word *some* is a **QUANTIFIER** (it tells us 'how much'). We look at articles in →13 and quantifiers in →14.
- **PREPOSITIONS**, such as *in* and *of*, show how other words are connected. We look at **PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES** in →16.
- The **CONJUNCTIONS** *and* and *but* connect **SENTENCES** and clauses.

A new life



A Part of the flight announcement on Steve's plane

Ladies and gentlemen, I would ask that you please direct your attention to the flight attendants as we review the emergency procedures for this flight. There are six emergency exits on this aircraft. Take a minute to locate the exit closest to you. Note that the nearest exit may be behind you. Should the cabin experience a sudden loss in pressure, oxygen masks will drop down from the panel above your seat ...

B Part of the novel that Steve was reading on the plane

Emilio had made what for him was the long journey to Tesquiliapan, leaving his nets bunched on the shore and his wooden-hulled boat to scorch in the glaring sun, to tell the old revolutionary's wife, and all her people, of the death of a mutual relative, a woman who had lived an astounding number of years, being famous all along the coast, and beyond, for her magical medicinal remedies which cured every manner of ill from heartache to problematic pregnancy, from disappointment to indignation.

D Steve's quick email to his friend Ana

NEW MESSAGE

To: ana@hotmail.com

From: steve@hotmail.com

Hey Ana

It was a rubbish flight. Miss you already. Come and visit. Soon.

Steve x

Sent from my iPhone

C Steve walks out of the customs hall

A: Steve? Steve Olsen?

B: Hi.

A: I'm Caroline Green. Welcome to Dubai.

B: Nice to meet you.

A: Good flight?

B: Yeah. They had some great movies.

A: That's good. Anyway, let's get going. The car's over there.

B: Yeah. Er, I was wondering if I could just use the bathroom.

A: Sure. I'll wait for you here.

E Steve's first tweet from Dubai



steve

Dubai. New life. Gr8 2b here. I think!

09 Apr 19: 20

What is register?

When Steve writes *Gr8 2b here (It's great to be here)* he uses **ABBREVIATIONS** because he doesn't want to use too many characters (letters) and because that is the style that some people use on *TWITTER* (a social networking site) →32. However, when Steve says *I was wondering if I could just use the bathroom* he uses a **PAST TENSE** with present meaning and the modal *could* because he is feeling **TENTATIVE** and thinks he needs to sound more **FORMAL**. In both cases he has chosen the type of language to use. We call this kind of language choice **REGISTER**.

- When Steve arrives at the airport, he is met by Caroline, his new boss. They use a mixture of fairly **NEUTRAL** language (*Welcome to Dubai/Nice to meet you*), **INFORMAL** language (*Good flight?/Yeab. They had some great movies*), and formal language (*I was wondering if I could just use the bathroom*), but they are always **POLITE** to each other. Politeness is different from formality; in other words, we can be polite whether or not our language is formal.
- When Steve says *I was wondering if I could just use the bathroom*, he is worried because his new boss has just said *The car's over there* and he doesn't want to upset her by making her wait. We choose our words based on the **PARTICIPANTS** in a conversation and the relationship we have with them.
- Steve writes *It was a rubbish flight. Miss you already* in a very informal and friendly **tone**. He uses an informal adjective (*rubbish*) and **ELLIPSIS** (*Miss you already*). He can write like this because he and Ana are close friends and because of the **MODE** (type of communication) he is using (an email).
- The pilot uses more formal language when he says *I would ask that you please direct your attention to the flight attendants as we review the emergency procedures for this flight*. This is because of a) the **TOPIC** he is talking about, and b) the mode (an official announcement – a **MONOLOGUE**).
- The sentence from the novel that Steve reads on the plane is extremely long, uses a number of subordinate clauses, very **LOW-FREQUENCY** vocabulary (*nets bunched ... scorch in the glaring sun ... medicinal remedies*). It is typical of a kind of **LITERARY** prose.

Register, therefore, is a combination of the kind of activity and topic we are writing and talking about (sometimes called **FIELD**), the *tone* we wish to use (based on the participants and their relationship to each other) and the *mode* of the communication (for example email, formal oral announcement, literary novel or tweet).

What do u think? R txt msgs gr8 or not?

When young people started sending **TEXT MESSAGES** in the 1990s, many people were very worried. They said that the language would be damaged and that nobody would write well anymore. In fact, this has not happened. Text messaging was (and is) just a different language register.

However, there *would* be something to worry about if students started to use abbreviations like *r* (for *are*) and *gr8* (for *great*) in more formal writing because it would not be appropriate. We need to be sure that they recognise this, and one way of doing it is to draw their attention to the register of the texts they read and hear.

When students write themselves, they should consider field, tone and mode so that they can use **APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE**: language that is right for the situation. If they are writing a formal essay, they need to use formal language rather than the kind of colloquial language and abbreviations that are found on social networking sites. But if they are communicating informally, they will want to be able to use some of these written devices in order to be appropriate.

Sentence elements

How do we know where to put the parts of speech to make a sentence? What are the **ELEMENTS OF A SENTENCE** and what order should they go in?

- Many sentences consist of some or all of the following: a **SUBJECT** (*She*) + a verb (*teaches*), an **OBJECT** (*teenagers*) and an adverb or an adverbial phrase (*at a large secondary school*).
- Sometimes sentences have more than one object. In the sentence *Her husband gave her a beautiful necklace*, *a beautiful necklace* is the **DIRECT OBJECT** (it is the thing that was given) and *her* is the **INDIRECT OBJECT** (she was the one who benefited from the action).
- Some sentences do not have an object. Instead they have a subject (*she*), a verb (*was*) and a **COMPLEMENT** (*happy*).
- Sometimes we only use a subject and a verb (*She cried*) →4.
- Sometimes we make more complicated sentences by joining together a number of **CLAUSES**. *She is married to a man / She met the man when she was skiing / She was skiing in Bariloche* becomes *She is married to a man she met when she was skiing in Bariloche*. We look at clauses in →2.

Getting things in the right order

The basic sentence elements (subject, verb, object, complement) are the spaces into which we place words. But we have to be careful which words we put into these spaces. For example, we can put pronouns (*she, he, they*, etc.) or **NOUN PHRASES** (*the young woman, the director, her husband*, etc.) into the subject space, but the sentence would not work if we put an adjective or an adverb there. For example, we cannot say *Angry is a teacher* or *Seriously is a student*. Similarly, we cannot put nouns or adjectives where verbs go, etc.

The sentence elements have to be arranged in correct sequences. For example, we can say *Manuela is a teacher* (SVC), or we can change the order to make a question: *Is Manuela a teacher?* (VSC). But we cannot say *Is a teacher Manuela* because we do not use the sequence VCS.

However, sometimes we re-arrange the order of the SVO elements and put the (indirect) object in the subject position. This is because we want to focus on who 'receives' the action (or because we don't know who did the action). For example, instead of using the **ACTIVE VOICE** and saying *The director of her school (1) presented her (2) with a 'Teacher of the Year' award*, we can use the **PASSIVE VOICE**: *She (2) was presented with a 'Teacher of the Year' award by the director of her school (1)*. We look at an activity to teach the passive voice in →7.

Teaching ideas: word order

We often get students to reorder words to make sentences. This makes them think carefully about syntax (the correct sequence of sentence elements). For example, we can say:

Put the following words in order to make correct sentences:

- Manuela's / was / wedding anniversary / yesterday
- a / at / Buenos Aires / teenagers / in / large / Manuela / secondary school / teaches
- bus / by / go / I / school / to / usually

We can also ask the students to put in punctuation, such as **CAPITAL LETTERS, FULL STOPS** (periods), **QUESTION MARKS, INVERTED COMMAS** (quotation marks), etc. →31

An enjoyable variation is to have the students hold the words on cards above their heads (so they can't see their own words). The other members of the class have to tell them where to stand to make a correct sentence **DVD1**.