

# **Chapter 1:**

## **The basics**

## I. Parts of speech

A speech in any language is constructed of words, wherein each word has its own function. These words represent the eight different parts of speech: noun, verb, pronoun, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. It is important to distinguish the difference between the parts of speech, because an English word can represent different parts, depending on how the word is used.

The word 'fast' is a great example. This word is mainly considered as an adjective; however, these following sentences argue to the contrary:

- It can have a function of an adverb: she ran fast. Here 'fast' modifies (adds value) to the verb 'ran', telling us how the action was performed.
- Also, it can be a noun: in Ramadan, as soon as the sun sets we break our fast.
- And as a verb: each year we fast for a whole month.

In those examples, the parts of speech that the word 'fast' represent are clear enough. However, this is not always the case, sometimes to determine the function of a word (i.e. part of speech) the context needs to be closely examined. In this following section, we will review the eight parts of speech in detail.

1) **Noun:** *n.*, a word best defined by reviewing its four types:

- a. **Common or concrete nouns:** concrete means existing in material form: table, student, university, letter, book.
- b. **Proper nouns:** they always begin with a capital letter. They are used to name a specific person (Mohamed), place (Fesdis), thing (Sun).
- c. **Collective noun:** it names a group of things, persons or creatures. They are easily recognizable because they are always followed by the word 'of': a herd of cattle, a flock of birds, a class of students. The collective noun is singular, even though it reflects a group of things, and must always be used with a *singular verb*.
- d. **Abstract noun:** it names something that has no physical properties, and can only be perceived by the mind rather than by any of the five senses. For example: happiness, sadness, fear, beauty, energy and politics.

If you can put 'a', 'an', or 'the' in front of a word, then it is a noun.

- 2) **Verb:** *v.*, a word that expresses what is happening, whether be it an action (to study), or a state of being (to exist). Here are three simple examples: the boy kicked the ball; his strength surprised him; the ball landed over a hundred meters away.

If a verb does not exist in a sentence, then it is not complete; hence, it is important to be able to distinguish the verbs.

- a. **Infinitive verbs:** in English, the infinitive is preceded by the word 'to': to study, to eat, to write, to watch.
  - b. **Tense:** A verb's tense means 'time', it establishes the time in which the action happened. There are three main tenses: past, present and future. Let us take the verb to eat as an example: I ate, I eat, I will/shall eat.
  - c. **Auxiliary verbs:** they modify the main verb to show past, present, and future tense. There are twenty-three auxiliary verbs: *can, could, would, should, **do**, does, did, has, **have**, had, may, might, must, shall, and will*; plus the eight forms of to **be** (*am, are, be, been, being, is, was, were*). Here are some examples: in what season do leaves fall off trees; I have been for a long walk; it looks as if it may rain.
  - d. **Participles:** there are two kinds of participles: the past and the present participle. The past participle is formed by adding **-d or -ed** to the infinitive; there is however an a long list of exceptions to this rule. Meanwhile, the present participle always ends in **-ing**. Here are some examples:
    - Past participles: **decided, denoted, departed, discussed**. The exceptions are for example: **brought, been, had, run, learnt**.
    - Present participles: **sleeping, eating, studying, writing**.
- 3) **Pronoun:** *pron.*, a word used to replace the noun, and avoid repetition: I/me/my, you/your/yours, he/him/his, she/her/hers, it/its, we/us/our, they/them/theirs. Here is an example:
- Brucellosis is a highly contagious bacterial disease. In Egypt, It has been reported in sheep, goats, and camels. In this example, the pronoun 'it' takes the place of the noun 'Brucellosis'.

- 4) **Adjective:** *adj.*, a word (or group of words) used to modify (describe) a noun or pronoun. Some example are: slimy salamander, cute cat, tall tree, green apple.

Adjectives are called modifiers because they limit or restrict the words they are modifying. Not just any apple, but the *green* apple.

The adjectives ‘a’, ‘an’, and ‘the’ are called **articles**. When you see an article, you know that a noun is coming.

- 5) **Adverb:** *adv.*, a word (or group of words) used to describe a verb, adjective, or other adverb. Adverbs answer questions related to when (*now*), where (*aloft*), how much (*very*), to what extent (*extremely*), and in what manner (*deftly*).

Here are some examples:

- He drives carelessly;
- She is highly intelligent;
- Very well.

Both adjectives and adverbs are modifiers, but they modify different kinds of words (parts of speech). Adjectives modify nouns or pronouns; while adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.

Let’s explore this example: age is very (*adv.*) high (*adj.*) price (*noun*) to pay for maturity. Here, the adverb *very* modifies the adjective *high*; the adjective *high* modifies the noun *price*.

- 6) **Conjunction:** *conj.*, a word used to connect other words (group of words), phrases, and clauses with words, phrases and clauses. The words joined together by conjunctions should share the same structure. Here are some examples:

- Happy and sad [word to word]
- Bent but not broken. [word to phrase]
- Do you want the green apple or the red apple? [phrase to phrase]

Conjunctions are divided into two types: coordination conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions. This distinction is explained in the next part. However, the key thing with conjunctions is not to over use them, and opt to use punctuation instead (especially commas, colons and semi-colons).

- a. **Coordinating conjunctions** (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*) connect words, phrases and clauses of same grammatical value. For example: I wrote a letter and an email.
  - b. **Subordinating conjunctions** join an independent and a dependent clause. They can reflect the type of relationship between the clauses (cause and effect, contrast,...). Subordinating conjunctions include: *until, since, before, as, if, when, although, because, as long as*, and *after*. For example: if you feel like you are having trouble breathing, you probably need to see a doctor.
- 7) **Preposition:** *prep.*, a word used to express the relationship between the noun or pronoun and other words in a sentence. Preposition means ‘placed before’, and the most common prepositions show direction (*through* the looking glass), time (*during* her dinnertime), and possession (*with* my colleagues). If a preposition does not operate with a noun or pronoun, it becomes an adverb, here is an example:
- He stood outside (*prep.*) the coffee shop.
  - He went outside (*adv.*).
- 8) **Interjection:** *interj.*, a word (or group of words) used to convey strong emotion or surprise, and an exclamation: Help! Never! Oops! Cool!