Grammar Town

Second Edition

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Grammar Town

Once upon a time,
far away and yet
not so far,
there was a town
called Grammar Town,
with shady streets and good shops
and nice places to walk.
In Grammar Town
people talked, and lived,
and did their work.
With everyone they
knew, the people
of Grammar Town
communicated with words.
Let us go visit Grammar Town....
There are many words in Grammar Town. There are nouns for things, such as *window*, and *roof*, and *bus*, and there are verbs for actions, like *walked*, or *read*, or *ate*. There are all kinds of words, and the words work together to make language.

*Language* is what we call all of the words that we combine to express ideas. Each idea is a sentence, but we will talk about that later.
When we think about language, that is called GRAMMAR.

We think about language in FOUR ways.

These four ways of thinking about language are called:

1. parts of speech
2. parts of the sentence
3. phrases
4. clauses
We will learn more about the four ways of thinking about language later, but here are the four levels:

1. **parts of speech**: the eight kinds of words

2. **parts of the sentence**: how words make ideas

3. **phrases**: little groups of words

4. **clauses**: simple or complicated ideas
Level One:
The Parts of Speech
1. NOUNS

Nouns are words that name things, like train, smoke, track, and land. Nouns can even be names of people, like Shorty Hawkins.
The word *noun* comes from the Latin *nomen*, meaning name.

**Proper nouns**, like *England* and *Jane*, are capitalized.

**Common nouns**, like *country*, *person*, and *sandwich*, are not capitalized.

A noun naming one thing, like *tree*, is **singular**.

A noun naming more, like *trees*, is **plural**.
2. PRONOUNS

Pronouns are quick words we use when we do not want to repeat a whole long noun. Instead of saying *Samuel Langhorne Clemens* (Mark Twain), we can just say *he*.

Pronouns make language fast!

The word *pronoun* means “for the noun.” The pronoun is a quick short-cut sound, like a beep.
One important group of pronouns is the **SUBJECT** pronouns:

I, you, he, she, it,
we, you, they

Another important group of pronouns is the **OBJECT** pronouns:

me, you, him, her, it,
us, you, them
Subject and object pronouns are used for different things.

Subject pronouns are for grammar subjects.
   I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they

Object pronouns are for grammar objects.
   me, you, him, her, it, us, you, them

You must memorize these two groups of pronouns.
   Repeat them until they will be in your mind forever.

We will discuss this later, but notice the pronouns in this sentence:

   I saw him, and he saw me, but she gave him and her the tomatoes.
Level Two: The Parts of the Sentence
So, how do the eight kinds of words work together?

Usually the noun, pronoun, and adjective say what we are talking about, and the verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection say something about it. This complete, two-part idea is called a SENTENCE.

Every sentence has two parts: what it is about, called the SUBJECT, and what we say about the subject, called the PREDICATE.

These two parts must make a complete thought, or else it is not a sentence but only a sentence fragment.
Do you remember that the noun and the verb are the two main parts of speech? Well, now we see these two in a new way. In a sentence the noun or its pronoun becomes the basis of the subject, and the verb becomes the basis of the predicate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>PREDICATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>is the owner of the shop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelena</td>
<td>walked down Main Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The old priory</td>
<td>is a huge building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The blue cab</td>
<td>stopped at the corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The water supply</td>
<td>comes from the mountain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The canal</td>
<td>was good for commerce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His countenance</td>
<td>seemed grim and tragic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The blue sky</td>
<td>looked serene.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that the verb is always in the predicate. We call the verb the *simple predicate*. The *complete predicate* is the verb and all other words that talk about the subject. When we say *predicate*, we usually will mean simple predicate—the verb.
Now we can examine a sentence in two different ways. If we want to see what kinds of words are in the sentence and what each word is doing, we look at the parts of speech, but if we want to understand the whole idea in action, what the idea is about, and what we are saying about it, then we look at Level Two, the parts of the sentence, which are in two sides: the subject side and the predicate side.

The tall boy | rode his bicycle down the path.
adj.    adj.    n.      v.    adj.    n.    prep.    adj.    n.

subject | predicate

In this sentence the complete subject is The tall boy, and the complete predicate is rode his bicycle down the path. The simple subject is the noun boy, and the simple predicate is the verb rode. Remember that when we talk about the subject and the predicate, we usually will mean the simple subject and the simple predicate.
Level Three: Phrases

A phrase is a group of words, but it acts like one word, like a single part of speech. It can act like an adjective, or an adverb, or a noun. Phrases do not contain subjects and verbs, though sometimes an entire phrase can be a subject.
Three Kinds of Phrases

Prepositional Phrases
Prepositional phrases always begin with prepositions, and they act like modifiers (like adjectives or adverbs).
Like an adjective: the bus at the corner
Like an adverb: they swam after school
Like an adjective: the letter for him and her

Appositive Phrases
Appositive phrases are interrupting definitions that are put (pos) beside (apo) what they define. They act like nouns or adjectives.
Robert, the new student, arrived late.
The viaduct, an old Roman design, was still in use.

Verbal Phrases
Verbals are verby words that are not used as verbs.
There are three kinds of verbals: gerunds, participles, and infinitives.
Gerunds: nouns made out of -ing verbs
Thinking is fun.
Participles: adjectives made out of verbs
Thinking quickly, the ice cream man filled the cone.
Completely broken, the gate swung freely.
Infinitives: nouns or modifiers made from the to form of the verb
To think is fun. (noun)
The man to see is Howard. (adjective)
He lived to read. (adverb)
Note: We think of the infinitive as one word.
Example: To think is regarded as one word.
Follow the trail....

First we learned that the noun and the verb are the two most important parts of speech.

Then we learned that the noun and verb become the subject and predicate, the most important parts of the sentence.

Then we learned that the subject/predicate is exactly what is never in a phrase.

Now we see where it leads: the noun and verb pair is the nucleus that is the heart of every clause. It is as though the noun/verb pair is always the key in all four levels of grammar.