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A Guide to Patterns and Usage in English

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PREFACE

My object in writing this book has been to provide information for those who are studying English as a foreign language. The book can be used for reference purposes by those who are no longer attending school or college, and as a textbook for more systematic study by those who are still attending classes. For the benefit of those who use it for reference purposes, a full index has been supplied.

The book is not designed as a complete grammar of the traditional kind. It does not, for example, set out and describe the various classes of nouns and pronouns. It is not concerned with accidence. Analysis is used only when this is helpful for synthesis, or sentence building. There is nothing on parsing in this book.

Much attention has been paid during recent years to the selection of vocabulary for use in courses for those learning English as a foreign language. Comparatively little attention has been paid to the patterns or structures of the language. A knowledge of how to put words together is as important as, perhaps more important than, a knowledge of their meanings. The most important patterns are those for the verbs. Unless the learner becomes familiar with these he will be unable to use his vocabulary. He may suppose that because he has heard and seen 'I intend (want, propose) to come', he may say or write 'I suggest to come', that because he has heard or seen 'Please tell me the meaning', 'Please show me the way', he can say or write 'Please explain me this sentence'. Because 'He began talking about the weather' means about the same as 'He began to talk about the weather', the learner may suppose wrongly, of course, that 'He stopped talking about the weather' means the same as 'He stopped to talk about the weather'.

It is important, too, that the student, when he learns a noun or adjective, should become familiar with the patterns in which that noun or adjective is normally used. When he learns such

adjectives as *kind* and *thoughtful*, for example, he should learn to use them in such sentence patterns as 'It was kind (thoughtful) of you to get tea ready for me' or 'How kind (thoughtful) of you to get tea ready for me!' When he learns the meanings of the adjective *anxious*, he should also learn its patterns: 'anxious about his son's health', 'anxious for news', 'anxious (= eager) to start'.

The Index of Words is not intended as a guide to all the patterns in which the verbs, nouns, adjectives, and pronouns occurring in it can be used. The learner is advised to make his own collection. He will do well, while he is reading, to enter on record cards, or in a loose-leaf notebook, any examples of patterns of common words that are likely to be useful to him when he comes to write English. For the verb *succeed*, for example, he might note such examples as 'They succeeded in their attempt' or 'They succeeded in climbing Mt. Everest' (VP 24). For the noun *intention* he might note the example: 'He has no intention of going' (NP 2). With this he might place the example: 'It is not his intention to go' (VP 22B) so that he will not confuse the noun and the verb pattern. If he also has an example of the verb *intend*, for example, 'He does not intend to go' (VP 2), he has full references available when he needs to write. A good dictionary will usually provide information on patterns, but the making of one's own collection is an excellent way of fixing usages in the memory.

The learner who wishes to speak and write English is concerned with 'grammatical' correctness. He should also be concerned with being idiomatic, with using an English style that will not strike the listener or reader as being artificial or stiff. Part Five of this book approaches this problem from a new angle. Instead of dealing with such auxiliary and modal verbs as *be*, *have*, *can-could*, *will-would*, *shall-should*, *may-might*, *must*, *ought* one by one and describing their functions, the situation is taken as the starting-point. The concept of obligation can be expressed by the use of such words as *necessity*, *necessary*, *compulsion*, *compulsory*, *obligation*, *obligatory*. (See the examples in § 114 a.) But except in formal style these are words that an Englishman is unlikely to use. He will prefer constructions with *have to* (or *have got to*),

must, *ought*, or *should*. These words, however, are often more difficult for the foreign learner to use correctly than the more formal words. Some of the verbs are defective. Others are used in irregular structures. The beginner is tempted to use the formal words because their patterns are easier than those for the words used in the informal or colloquial style. By grouping together the various ways in which such concepts as obligation and necessity, permission, possibility, achievement, wishes, and hopes can be expressed, I have tried to help the learner to become familiar with the most frequently used ways of expressing these concepts.

The approach to the problems of time and tense has been made from the same angle. Instead of taking the tenses one by one and describing their uses, I have taken time as the starting-point. Here is an aspect of time, or here is a situation or state. Which tense or tenses can be used here? Or what tense equivalents are available and perhaps preferable?

It is a sound principle not to present the learner with specimens of incorrect English and require him to point out and correct the errors. Such a procedure in the form of exercises is undoubtedly harmful. In this book I have occasionally given specimens of incorrect usage, but only when these are errors that I know, from wide experience, to be frequent. Such specimens, whenever they occur, are marked by the warning sign ♣. The sign is occasionally used to indicate not a grammatically incorrect sentence but a sentence that is not quite idiomatic, a sentence for which there is a preferable alternative. Thus the sentence 'A map is on the wall' is not wrong. But the sentence 'There is a map on the wall' is preferable. If the learner is taught to avoid 'A map is on the wall', even though it is defensible, he is less likely to compose the sentence 'Four windows are in this room', which is indefensible.

In a small number of sections, where word order may vary according to stress, and where there is reference to strong and weak forms, phonetic transcriptions with stress marks have been used. A list of phonetic symbols is given on pages x–xi.

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NOTE TO THE FOURTH IMPRESSION

IN this impression some errors have been corrected, and some changes have been made in the arrangement of the examples in Tables Nos. 47, 64, and 67, for verb patterns.

I am indebted for advice on these points to Professor T. Iwasaki, who has edited this book, with notes in Japanese, for an edition published by Kenkyusha, Tokyo.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MY chief debt is to the European grammarians: O. Jespersen, *Essentials of English Grammar*; *Modern English Grammar* (7 volumes); and *Analytic Syntax*; H. Poutsma, *A Grammar of Late Modern English* (Part I, The Sentence); E. Kruisinga, *A Handbook of Present Day English*; R. W. Zandvoort, *A Handbook of English Grammar*.

I am also indebted to H. Sweet, *New English Grammar* (Part II); C. T. Onions, *An Advanced English Syntax*; H. E. Palmer, *A Grammar of Spoken English*; G. O. Curme, *Syntax* (Volume III of *A Grammar of the English Language*).

I have found much useful information in the pages of the British Council's periodical *English Language Teaching* and in *English Studies* (Amsterdam). Mr. W. S. Allen's exposition of English tense usage, especially the Future Tense equivalents, in his *Living English Structure*, has been of great help.

My work on Sentence Patterns began in the period between the two world wars when I was associated with Dr. H. E. Palmer in the work of the Institute for Research in English Teaching at the Department of Education in Tokyo. I owe much to Dr. Palmer's inspiring leadership during those years. We were not always in agreement and the verb patterns set out in this volume (and in *An Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*) differ in some respects (apart from order) from the patterns set out in Dr. Palmer's *Grammar of English Words*. But although we could not always see eye to eye, my own work owes much to his initiative and enthusiasm.

CONTENTS

PART 1. Verbs and Verb Patterns

PART I

Verbs and Verb Patterns

DEFINITIONS

§ 1 a. Verbs are either non-finites or finites. The non-finites are the infinitives, present and perfect, the participles, present and past, and the gerund (also called the verbal noun). The finites are those parts of the verb other than the non-finites. Thus the non-finites of the verb *be* are: (*to*) *be*, (*to*) *have been*, *being*, and *been*. The finites of the verb *be* are *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*.

The infinitives are used both with and without *to*. E.g. I want *to go*. I ought *to have gone*. I can *go*. I could *have gone*. These two kinds of infinitive are distinguished by the use of the terms '*to*-infinitive' (with *to*) and 'bare infinitive' (without *to*).

The present participle and the gerund are the same in form. The boys are *swimming* (present participle). The boys enjoy *swimming* (gerund).

§ 1 b. The term AUXILIARY VERB (or HELPING VERB) is applied to those verbs that are used in the formation of the tenses. The finites of *be* are auxiliary when they are used to form the progressive (or continuous) tenses. E.g. They *are* reading. The boys *were* playing football. They are auxiliary when used to form the passive voice. E.g. The soldier *was* wounded. The boxes *were* opened. The finites of *have* are auxiliary when used to form the perfect tenses. E.g. He *has* left. They *have* gone. They *had* finished their work. *Will* and *shall* can be described as auxiliary when they are used to form the future tenses. E.g. Tomorrow *will* be Monday. I *shall* be thirty next month.

§ 1 c. The term DEFECTIVE VERB is used of those verbs of which

some parts are lacking. Thus *must* has neither infinitive nor participles. *Will*, *shall*, *can*, *may*, and *ought* are defective verbs.

§ 1 d. The term IRREGULAR VERB is often used of those verbs that are not regularly inflected. E.g. *go*, *went*, *gone*; *show*, *showed*, *shown*; *begin*, *began*, *begun*; *take*, *took*, *taken*.

§ 1 e. The term ANOMALOUS FINITE (abbreviated to A.F. in tables and patterns) is used of the 24 finites set out in the table below, at the right-hand side.

	Non-finite Forms			*Finite Forms*	
	Infinitive	*Present Participle*	*Past Participle*	*Present Tense*	*Past Tense*
1	be	being	been	am, is, are	was, were
2	have	having	had	have, has	had
3	do	doing	done	do, does	did
4	—	—	—	shall	should
5	—	—	—	will	would
6	—	—	—	can	could
7	—	—	—	may	might
8	—	—	—	must	—
9	—	—	—	ought	—
10	—	—	—	need	—
11	—	—	—	dare	—
12	—	—	—	—	used

The adjective *anomalous* means 'irregular'. The verbs in the table are irregular in the way in which such verbs as *go* and *show* are irregular. But these 24 finites are different from all other finites because they have special functions. The most obvious difference is that they can be used joined to the contracted form of *not*. E.g. *isn't*, *wasn't*, *haven't*, *don't*, *didn't*, *shouldn't*, *couldn't*, *oughtn't*. The term ANOMALOUS FINITE is restricted to those finite verbs that combine with *not* in this way, and is used of these finites only when they are capable of being contracted with *not* in this way. Thus, *have* is anomalous in: 'I haven't finished'; 'I haven't time to do it now.' But *have* is not anomalous in: 'I have breakfast at seven o'clock.' (In this sentence *have* is an ordinary verb. Here it means 'take' or 'eat'. The negative is *don't have*. See § 4 d below.)

The 24 anomalous finites are not always auxiliary. The finites of *be* are not auxiliary in: She *is* a teacher. They *aren't* busy. They *were* red. The finites of *have* are not auxiliary in: *Have* you any money? She *has* two brothers. They *had* a good holiday. I *haven't* time.

The term ANOMALOUS FINITE is useful when we wish to distinguish these 24 verbs (1) from auxiliary verbs (because *be* and *have* are not always auxiliary), (2) from irregular verbs (because this term is used loosely and widely), and (3) from defective verbs (because *be*, *do*, and *have* are not defective).

If a less unfamiliar term for these 24 finites is preferred, the term 'special finites' (or, for beginners, 'the 24 friends of *not*') may be used.

FUNCTIONS OF THE ANOMALOUS FINITES

§ 2 a. These 24 finites have many functions. These can be divided into two main classes.

First, they are important as structural words. They are needed in the formation of the negative and interrogative. They are used to avoid repetition, e.g. in short answers and in disjunctive (or 'tag') questions. They are needed for the emphatic affirmative. They affect the position of certain adverbs.

Secondly, they are used to form certain moods for which English has no inflected verb forms. When used in this way they may be termed MODAL VERBS or MODAL AUXILIARIES. (*Modal* is the adjective that corresponds to *mode*, another word for *mood*.) The uses of these 24 finites for these purposes are dealt with in those sections of this book that describe how to express such concepts as ability (e.g. with *can*, *could*), possibility (e.g. with *may*, *might*), permission (e.g. with *may*, *might*, *can*, *could*), and obligation (e.g. with *must*, *ought to*, *have to*). See §§ 109–24.

The Formation of the Negative

§ 2 b. A finite verb is made negative by the addition of *not*. In modern English, however, only the 24 anomalous finites are made

negative by the simple addition of *not* after them. Other finite verbs are made negative with the help of the auxiliary verb *do*.

They *ought not* to go tomorrow.
We *dare not* leave him alone.

He wants it, (*He* does *want it*), *He does not want it.*
He wanted it, (*He* did *want it*), *He did not want it.*
They went there, (*They* did *go there*), *They did not go there.*

In spoken English, and in informal written English (e.g. social correspondence), the contracted negative forms are used: *isn't, aren't, didn't, wouldn't, use(d)n't.*

Note. The use of *not* with finites other than the anomalous finites was usual in older English (e.g. Shakespeare, the Authorized Version of the Bible) but is not found in modern English.

The Formation of the Interrogative

§ 2 c. The interrogative is formed by the inversion of the subject and the finite verb, except when the subject is an interrogative pronoun. (*Who came?* not ✱ *Did who come?*) Only the 24 anomalous finites are, in modern English, inverted with the subject in this way.

They are ready. Are they ready?
He can swim. Can he swim?

With other finites the auxiliary verb *do* is needed.

They went away. (*They* did *go away.*) *Did they go away?*
He likes it. (*He* does *like it.*) *Does he like it?*

Went you and similar examples of a subject preceded by a non-anomalous finite are archaic.

The Interrogative-Negative

§ 2 d. This is formed by placing *not* after the subject in formal

written style, or, in informal written style, and almost always in spoken English, by the use of the contracted negative forms.

Does he want it? (*Does he not want it?*) *Doesn't he want it?*
Did they go? (*Did they not go?*) *Didn't they go?*

Other Examples of Inversion

§ 2 e. Inversion of the subject and finite verb (always one of the 24 anomalous finites) occurs after a front-position negative (including such semi-negatives as *hardly*, *scarcely*, *little*).

Little did they know that . . . (They little knew that . . .)
In no other way can the matter be explained. (The matter can be explained in no other way.)
Hardly had we started when it began to rain. (We had hardly started when it began to rain.)

Avoidance of Repetition

§ 2 f. The 24 anomalous finites are used to avoid repetition. They are used in short answers to questions.

Did you find it? Yes, I did (= found it).
Can you do it alone? Yes, I think I can (= can do it alone).
Who broke the window? Tom did (= broke the window).
Who wants to come with me? All of us do (= want to go with you).
He didn't often grumble and when he did (= grumbled), *no one paid any attention to him.*

Disjunctive (or 'Tag') Questions

§ 2 g. Only the 24 anomalous finites are used in these questions.

Tomorrow's Sunday, isn't *it?*
He left yesterday, didn't *he?*
You want five, don't *you?*
They won't be here for long, will *they?*
You can't speak Danish, can *you?*

§ 2 h. The anomalous finites are used in several common minor patterns. These patterns are used to avoid repetition.

They are used in the pattern: *so* (*nor, neither*) × A.F. × Subject. The subject is stressed in this pattern.

I can do it and so can ˈ*you* (= you also can do it).

I can't do it and neither can ˈ*you* (= you can't do it, either). (I.e. Neither you nor I can do it.)

Tom went to church and so did *his* ˈ*sister* (= and his sister went to church, too).

Harry didn't go to church; nor did *his* ˈ*sister* (= and his sister didn't go to church, either). (I.e. Neither Harry nor his sister went to church.)

X: *I must leave now.*

Y: *So* must ˈ*I* (= and I must leave now, too).

They are used in the pattern: *so* × Subject (or *there**) × A.F. This is a pattern used to express agreement with, or to put emphasis on, a statement. The A.F. is stressed in this pattern.

X: *I hear you went to Leeds last week.*

Y: *So I* ˈdid. (I.e. Yes, that's right. I went to Leeds last week.)

A: *There are two tigers in the garden!*

B: *So there* ˈare! (Yes, you're right! There are two tigers in the garden!)

They are used in the patterns: *No* × Subject × A.F. × *n't* and *But* × Subject × A.F. (× *n't*). These patterns are used to correct a statement or suggestion (e.g. in the form of a question) that is false. The A.F. is stressed.

X: *I hear you failed in your examination.*

Y: *No, I* ˈdid*n't*! (= I did not fail in my examination.)

A: *Why did you hit that child?*

B: *But I* ˈdid*n't!* (= I did not hit that child.)

C: *Why didn't you help the old man?*

D: *But I* ˈdid! (= I did help the old man.)

* Preparatory *there*. See § 34 b, Table No. 58.