

A Reference Grammar for Students of English

英语学习者用参考语法

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A reference grammar for
students of English
R A Close



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Foreword

Students of English are fortunate in having this further opportunity to share the insights of R. A. Close into the complexities and delicacies of English grammar. He brings to the task of writing the present book an enviable and scarcely surpassed experience of forty years' advanced English teaching in many countries with widely ranging language backgrounds – notably Japan, China, Chile, Greece, Czechoslovakia and France. The impact of his work in the classroom is measured in part by the successful pursuit of his aims and methods by the countless teachers who have had the benefit of studying under him. But his influence has happily made itself felt to an even wider extent through the printed page. He has generously given his advice to writers on English language teaching in many countries, and their books have been immeasurably better in consequence. More importantly still, he has himself written numerous articles and several books, all of them informed by a clarity, profundity, and subtlety of mind, and written with a pen which with surgical keenness probes and dissects problems that had previously seemed so entangled and obscured as to merit despairing abandonment in the no-man's land of 'idiom'.

A reference grammar for students of English demonstrates another of his notable gifts: the ability to compress analyses, learning, and pedagogical counsel with rigorous but ever readable economy. And it is an economy which leaves him room both to reflect the thinking of other linguists and also – a striking feature of the book – to endorse his statements with liberal and enlightening examples. As a result, he has provided an invaluable guide to students and teachers of English alike.

Randolph Quirk
University College London

Preface

With the rapid advance of linguistic science, there has been a revolution in English grammar. 'Traditional' grammar is now considered to be obsolete, to have been forced into a mould originally intended for Latin, and to be dominated by dogma about what should and should not be said. New theories, or 'models', of grammar are constantly being developed. Yet the facts of English usage remain; and people need to know what the facts are.

English grammar is largely a matter of sentence construction. It is information that we can apply, consciously or unconsciously, to form sentences that are acceptable as a whole or in detail. *Part One* of this book will explain how an English sentence is built up. In the process, it will briefly describe the grammatical system as a whole and will introduce the terminology with which we can label its component parts. The description will include much that is still valid in the old style of grammar, as well as innovations that seem likely to last. Some of the terminology may be new; most of it is well known, though the revolution has obliged us to redefine terms whose meaning has become blurred. In any case, the terminology and the concepts behind it are broadly in accordance with those of *A Grammar of Contemporary English*,¹ which is without doubt the English Grammar of our times.

Part Two will deal with the detail. It is mainly to this part of the book, together with the Index, that readers will turn for reference. However, an understanding of the information given in *Part Two* may depend on a careful study of *Part One*.

This Grammar is, relatively, 'short'. It aims at concentrating on frequently-used constructions. Lists of verbs and adjectives, for example, have been taken, with few additions, from *A General Service List of English Words*.¹ The adverb 'normally' often occurs in this book. That expression has not been used loosely; it points to a norm from which deviation can occur in the haste of modern times, in the continuance of regional tradition, and, especially, in creative writing.

A bibliography is provided, on page 305, not only as a guide to further reading, but also in acknowledgement of works I have consulted and used.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Professor Randolph Quirk, with whom I have been personally associated since 1958, especially since my election as an Honorary Research Fellow at University College, London, where I have had the privilege of drawing on the facilities of the Survey of English Usage and of benefiting from contact with its staff.

I am particularly grateful to Mr John Bright for so conscientiously

¹ See Bibliography on page 305.

working through a draft of this book, and for making many suggestions for improvement which I have gladly adopted; also to Mr Peter Clifford, Mr D. K. Swan, Miss Delia Halnon and Mrs Eileen Mohr of Longman Group Ltd, for their unfailing and very efficient help throughout the arduous process of converting a much-revised manuscript into publishable form.

For years, my wife has been telling me that a short English reference grammar is badly needed. I would like to think that the result is worthy of her inspiration and encouragement.

R A C

English vowel and consonant sounds, and their spellings**Vowels**

PHONETIC SYMBOL	VOWEL SOUND AS IN:
i:	<i>see, sea, me, these</i>
i	<i>it, very</i>
e	<i>get</i>
æ	<i>cat</i>
ɑ:	<i>car</i>
ɒ	<i>hot</i>
ɔ:	<i>horn, saw</i>
ʊ	<i>put</i>
u:	<i>too, June, blue, new</i>
ʌ	<i>up</i>
ə:	<i>her, bird, burn</i>
ə	<i>better, actor, collar</i>
DIPHTHONG SOUND AS IN:	
ei	<i>day, rain, date</i>
əu	<i>go, toe, note, coat</i>
ai	<i>fly, fine, high</i>
au	<i>how, house</i>
ɔi	<i>boy, noise</i>
iə	<i>here, hear, cheer</i>
ɛə	<i>chair, care</i>

Note: All vowel and diphthong sounds are 'voiced'.

Consonants**Voiced**

PHONETIC SYMBOL	CONSONANT SOUND AS IN:
b	<i>burn</i>
m	<i>moon</i>
w	<i>we</i>
v	<i>voice</i>
ð	<i>this</i>
d	<i>day</i>
n	<i>no</i>
l	<i>look, feel</i>
r	<i>run</i>
z (sibilant)	<i>zoo, pens</i>
ʒ (sibilant)	<i>measure</i>
j	<i>yes</i>
g	<i>gate</i>
ŋ	<i>long</i>
h	<i>here</i>

Voiceless

p	pen, stop
f	full, roof
θ	thin
t	tea, cat
s (sibilant)	see, books
ʃ (sibilant)	ship, brush
k	cat, kick

Also sibilant are the combinations tʃ as in *match* and dʒ as in *judge*.

Relation between pronunciation and spelling

The spelling in the words given as examples above may be called 'standard'. That is to say, it would be assumed by a speaker of English that a word spelt *heed* would be pronounced with vowel /i:/, that *hid* would be pronounced with vowel /i/, *led* with vowel /e/, and so on. When this assumption cannot be made in the case of some of the irregular verbs, the pronunciation is indicated by phonetic symbols.

Stress

When the pronunciation of a word of more than one syllable is given, the sign ' indicates that the following syllable is stressed, as in *be'ginning*, *offe'ring*. In compound nouns and in nominal groups, stress is indicated thus:

a *g'ood* *f'riend*, *b'oil'ing* *w'ater*: stress on both parts

a *s'chool* *f'riend*, a *b'ath'ing* *co'stume*: stress on the first part.

The element marked ` has what is called NUCLEAR STRESS, and it is here that the voice falls (or rises) in pitch.

Conventions and abbreviations used

/feis/	phonetic transcription
offer	syllable following ' is stressed
You { should } be	both <i>should be</i> and <i>ought to be</i> are acceptable in the example given, without change of meaning
{ =ought to }	
He { does } not go	both <i>does not</i> and <i>did not</i> are acceptable in the example given, but with different meaning
{ did }	
I said (that) it was	a word in round brackets in an example is optional
cp	compare
eg	for example
ie	that is
viz	namely
¹ after a sentence	this refers to a footnote
* before a sentence	the sentence following * is unacceptable

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Part One

Chapter One

Constructing the sentence

1.1

We tend to speak, and we normally aim at writing, in COMPLETE SENTENCES. In spoken English, we often give short responses, which can be recognised as *parts* of complete sentences (1.60); and writers of advertisements, for example, sometimes deliberately produce 'sentences' that are not complete (2.36). To be complete, a sentence needs at least one FINITE, INDEPENDENT CLAUSE. In this chapter, we shall see what a clause in English consists of and what makes it finite.

A Finite clauses and simple sentences

1.2

a We can best see what a finite clause is by examining examples of a SIMPLE SENTENCE. A simple sentence contains only one finite clause, so that the structure of a finite clause is identical with that of a simple sentence. Here are ten one-clause sentences from a short story:

- 1 **I** have just telephoned George Lamb.
- 2 **He** was my best friend.
- 3 **This** is his photograph.
- 4 **We** were placed in the same class twenty years ago.
- 5 At nine o'clock, **we all** assembled in the hall.
- 6 **The boys** were waiting for the headmaster to come in.
- 7 **The headmaster's desk** stood on a high platform.
- 8 **He** did not like us, George and me, very much.
- 9 **Everyone in our class** could see that.
- 10 Yet **George** always did his work perfectly.

b Each of those one-clause sentences has a SUBJECT, which is in bold type. Except for yet in [10] the rest of each sentence is the PREDICATE, ie what is said about the subject. If either of those two parts, subject or predicate, were missing, the sentence would not be complete. However, in an IMPERATIVE, as in [13] and [14] below, the subject is usually unstated. Note that the subject often is, but need not be, the first part of the sentence.

Statements, questions and imperatives

1.3

a Examples [1] to [10] are all STATEMENTS. A clause may also take the form of a QUESTION, as in:

- 11 Have you seen George Lamb today?

12 *Did you know him well?*

In [11] and [12], the subject is again in bold type, and the rest of the sentence is the predicate, part of which now comes before the subject. The subject of a question like [11] or [12] can be easily found, because it comes immediately after the first part of the predicate (1.26, 2.3).

- b A clause may take the form of an IMPERATIVE, as in:

13 *Have this seat.*

14 *Be careful.*

In those two examples, only the predicate is stated. If the subject of an imperative clause is absent, we assume it is *you*, the person or persons addressed, since *you* occurs if we expand [13] and [14] to:

13a *You have this seat.*

13b *Have this seat, will you?*

14a *You be careful.*

14b *Be careful, will you?*

However, a subject other than *you* can be actually stated, as in:

15a *Somebody take this seat.*

15b $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{All} \\ \text{Everybody} \end{array} \right\}$ stand up please.

- c An imperative often expresses a command; it can also express an invitation, a request or a warning (3.10).

Affirmative, interrogative and negative

1.4 肯定句、疑问句和否定句

We can make AFFIRMATIVE statements, as in

16 *I have found some mistakes already;*

or we can avoid an affirmative statement, as in the INTERROGATIVE

17 *Have you found any mistakes yet?*

or as in the NEGATIVE

18 *I haven't found any yet.*

The distinction between affirmative on the one hand, and interrogative and negative on the other, is marked in a number of ways in English: note, for example, the use of *some* and *already* in [16] as opposed to *any* and *yet* in [17] and [18]. Other examples are *I have found some mistakes too* and *I haven't found any either*.

B The noun phrase

1.5

The subject of a clause is usually (2.8, 2.18, 3.17, 3.24) A NOUN PHRASE. 'Noun phrase', often abbreviated to NP, is a convenient term for any one of the following:

- a a NOUN, such as *George*, *boys*;

- b a NOMINAL GROUP, such as *the boys*, *the headmaster's desk*, in which a noun (*boys*, *desk*) is the HEAD, and in which the other words (*the*, *the headmaster's*) MODIFY the head;

- c a PRONOUN, which may be one of the seven so-called PERSONAL PRONOUNS (*I, you, he, she, it, we, they*¹) or an INDEFINITE PRONOUN like *everyone* or *something*, or one of the words like *this* and *that* which can be used as pronouns and which are listed in 6.2. A pronoun is a PRO-FORM, ie a form used instead of another form. Various types of pro-form will be mentioned in this book;
- d a PRONOMINAL GROUP, such as *we all, everyone in our class*, in which a pronoun (*we, everyone*) is the head.
- Besides being the subject of a clause, an NP can have other functions (1.33).

Nouns

1.6

- a A noun is a word that we can use at certain points in the structure of a sentence. Thus, *work* is a noun if it fills the gap in *He always did his – perfectly*. It is a VERB (1.13) if it fills the gap in *His brothers – in a factory*.
- b A noun may be a PROPER NOUN (*George, George Lamb, New York*) or a COMMON NOUN (*friend, desk, bird, air*).
- c Both proper nouns and common nouns can refer to something ANIMATE (*George, friend, bird*) or INANIMATE (*New York, desk, wing*).
- d A proper noun is the name of someone or something that is usually imagined as UNIQUE: the speaker in example [1] is assuming that there is only one George Lamb. On the other hand, a common noun is a name given either to one example, or more, of a CLASS OF THING or to the CLASS AS A WHOLE. *Friend* refers to one example of a class in *George was a good friend*, but to the class as a whole in *A friend is somebody we like and know well*. A common noun is often found in a nominal group, and by modifying the head (1.5b) the speaker can say which particular example of a class he has in mind. The MODIFIERS *the*, in [6], and *the headmaster's*, in [7], help to DETERMINE which examples of the classes of thing called 'boy' and 'desk' the speaker is talking about. A proper noun will not normally be modified in this way.

Note: It is true that the sun, for example, is unique, in so far as for most of us it is the only thing of its kind. But we can talk of *other suns* and we often use *sun* as the head of a nominal group, eg *the rising sun*. For such reasons, we may classify *sun* as a common noun. We can also imagine more than one George Lamb and say *That is not the George Lamb I mean*. However, there would no doubt be general agreement that a name like *George Lamb* or *New York* does not normally need to be modified.

eg for example

¹ We should add to these seven the indefinite personal pronoun *one*, as in *What does one do now?*

Modifiers**1.7**

- a** We can have **PREmodifiers**, coming before the head, or **POSTmodifiers** coming after it, thus:

PREMODIFIERS	HEAD	POSTMODIFIERS
a good	friend	
my school	friends	
the	headmaster	of the school
the headmaster's	desk	
several	boys	
	we	all
	everyone	in our class

When the head is a noun, modifiers usually precede it. Phrases on the pattern of *the school* (1.36d) follow it. When the head is a pronoun, modifiers normally follow it, too.¹

- b** In the column headed **PREMODIFIERS** above, there are three main classes of word:

- i *good*, which is an **ADJECTIVE**. In *a good friend* both the adjective and the noun are stressed: **NUCLEAR STRESS** is then on *friend* (see p xii).
- ii *school*, which is a noun modifying another noun, and which here refers to a **SUBCLASS** of the class of person called 'friend'. In *a school friend*, nuclear stress is on the modifier.
- iii *a*, *my*, *the*, *the headmaster's* and *several*, which are **DETERMINERS**. Determiners can be **IDENTIFIERS** (6.16), telling us, either definitely or indefinitely, which friend or which school friends or which headmaster, the speaker means; or they can be **QUANTIFIERS** (6.33), telling us, again either definitely or indefinitely, what quantity. Thus, both identifiers and quantifiers can be indefinite (*eg a*) or definite (*the*). We can subdivide the definite determiners into those that **SPECIFY** and those that do not.

For example:

- George went to a school: *a* is indefinite;
 He went to the school: *the* is definite, but it still does not specify, by itself, exactly *which* school;
 He went to this school: *this* is both definite and **SPECIFYING**: it tells us exactly *which* school.

Determiners**1.8**

- a** Identifiers include:

- i **THE ARTICLES** – the **INDEFINITE ARTICLE**, *a*, and the **DEFINITE ARTICLE**, *the*;

¹ There are a few exceptions to this rule. Here is one:

A I've finished all my work. B Lucky you!

- ii the DEMONSTRATIVES, *this* and *that*, *these* and *those*;
 - iii the POSSESSIVE form of the personal pronouns. (*my*, *your*, *his*, *her*, *its*, *our*, *their*, *one's*.)
- b Quantifiers include NUMERALS, and *much* and *many* which are freely used in negative and interrogative sentences but usually avoided in affirmative sentences in informal style, as in:
- 19 A Were there many boys in George's class?
 B No, there weren't many.
 but Yes, there were a lot.

Count nouns and mass nouns

1.9

- a *Much* and *many* also illustrate the distinction between COUNT NOUNS (also called UNIT NOUNS or COUNTABLES) and MASS NOUNS (or UNCOUNTABLES). Count nouns such as *friend*, *desk*, can be preceded by *one*, and may have a separate plural form which can be preceded by *How many* or by a numeral higher than one. Mass nouns, like *bread*, *milk*, cannot be preceded by *one*, they cannot have a separate plural form, but can be preceded by *How much*.
- b Just as a word like *work* can act as either a noun or a verb, so a number of nouns may be used either as mass or as count according to the speaker's exact meaning: *light* is a mass noun in *Light travels much faster than sound*; it is a count noun in *I have a light by my bed*.

Person, number and gender

1.10

Nouns and pronouns, besides being animate or inanimate, can also be PERSONAL (human) or NON-PERSONAL (animal or inanimate object). We say *Who was on the platform?* if we expect a personal noun as the answer, *What was on the platform?* if we expect a non-personal one.¹ The traditional term PERSONAL PRONOUN, still in use today, employs 'personal' in a different way. The words *I*, *you*, *he*, etc., are called 'personal' because they can be classified thus:

Table 1

		SINGULAR	PLURAL
1ST PERSON		I	we
2ND PERSON		you	you
3RD PERSON	MASCULINE	he	} they
	FEMININE	she	
	NEUTER	it	

¹ But *who* can be used with reference to a domestic animal, as in *Who is that scratching at the door? Danny (our dog) or Tom (our cat)?*