# X-Word Grammar
## A Grammar for the Classroom

JOHN HASKELL

LANGUAGE IS, IN ONE SENSE, a set of systems dealt with in the study of linguistics. For all the ESL training some people have, which generally includes a number of courses in one area of linguistics or another, the most uncomfortable area of language teaching for most teachers is grammar—how to present and explain it.

There are three good reasons for this lack of confidence which teachers display. First, most teachers of English or ESL in this country are native speakers of English and have therefore never been formally exposed to English grammar except in those limited doses which their literature-trained teachers felt compelled to give them—and then only as a prescriptive set of rules in criticism of poor writing.

Second, as educated speakers of English, these teachers have the intuitive ability to "feel" whether or not language is "appropriately used." This feeling about language is generally not transferable—not a skill that can easily be shown or taught to students. It is too bound by the culture of, and the experience with, the language. This intuition is also, unfortunately, coupled in the minds of most native speakers with vague folk-notions of what is correct—notions which are further fostered by

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society at large, in tandem with the English teacher, and in opposition to natural social dialect variations. (Black English, Bronx and Brooklyn accents, and the Puerto Rican and Argentinian dialects of Spanish come to mind as varieties of languages which, while naturally occurring and naturally developed, are felt, even by many speakers of these varieties, to be inferior to the "standard" variety.) This is not a very good basis upon which to build in evaluating and transferring any "intuitive" knowledge of the arbitrarily determined standard to native speakers, let alone non- or limited speakers of a language.

Third, the teaching of linguistics, in most cases, does not present the language in a useful manner for the potential language teacher. Linguists do not generally view their job as one of helping teachers to understand language in any way which would allow them to transfer any understanding of it to their students, either native speaking or limited English speaking—at least not directly. While this is a blanket indictment of linguists and those linguistics department offerings generally required of TESL (teaching English as a second or foreign language) students, our observation has been that even those courses offered under the titles of "applied linguistics" or "linguistics for teachers," even those offered by schools of education or in English or foreign language departments, generally do not deal any better with basic pedagogical information such as: What are pronouns and how do we use them?, What is the difference between the past and present perfect usage of the English verb?, When do we use *among* and *between?*, etc.—those things which a teacher must present, explain, and use in the classroom.

Part of the problem is, of course, historical. No one wanted to be responsible for ESL teaching because it was not a "university-level" course, nor did they know where to put a clearly specialized kind of "English teacher" training program. TESL programs are found in schools of education, generally as part of the English or bilingual education programs; in English departments of schools of humanities, often with linguistics, creative writing, developmental English, and freshman composition (all of those areas looked upon with disdain by the "literature types" who generally make up these departments); or in linguistics departments whose members generally eschew applied linguistics as beneath their "area of study," but who, on the other hand, are willing to house ESL or TESL programs in order to use available monies which accrue from such programs to improve student-teacher ratios, or to take advantage of the student assistantships which many ESL programs offer.

This does not suggest a very pretty picture for the potential ESL teacher. Tragically, it results, too often, in required linguistics courses, taught by individuals who are indifferent to the pedagogical needs of ESL, bilingual, or FL teachers.

There is no denying the need for, nor the value of, a theoretical discussion or study of language, nor the need to research the various aspects of language theory or language learning. It is time, however, that we came to terms, as ESL/TESL professionals, with its application in the classroom, and the very special understanding that this specialized use requires. Offering a course in general linguistics followed by one in phonology and one in syntax, which is the current practice in most schools, will not, by itself, do. It will not do for a number of reasons. First and foremost, those courses are not aimed at the application of any knowledge or understanding of grammar and usage, but taught as the basis for future course offerings. Introductory or General Linguistics is basically a general course in phonetics and grammar, much as Biology is an overview of botany and zoology—good for freshmen searching for a major, but not as valuable for upperclassmen or graduate students who have already determined their linguistic needs, whether that be as theoretical or applied linguists or as teachers of language. Phonetics and syntax courses are generally based these days on transformational grammar theory which, while it may (if presented well) free the student from the shackles of prescriptive grammar, does not provide much security about the kinds of decisions which must be made in evaluating errors and presenting information to second language learners.

What an ESL or FL teacher needs is a presentation of language which allows language to be understood, organized, and presented to language learners clearly and economically. While there is much to be said for the growth in our understanding of language and language acquisition as a result of Chomsky and the transformational-generative linguists, the near abandoning of structuralist presentation of language with its clear surface-level view of language systems has been a severe handicap to potential language teachers. Unlike the transformational forests, structural linguistics at least looked at language in terms that a language teacher could understand and transfer to classroom presentation. (One must admit, though, that it also allowed for past narrow applications such as the early mechanical audiolingual (linguistic) approach to language teaching of the '50s and '60s, which did not place as much value on meaning and usage as we currently do. This should not be considered so much a failure of the linguist as of the pedagogues who became caught up in the behaviorist psychology of the mid-twentieth century.)

How do teachers choose the correct linguistic theory for teaching? Should they? Should courses reflect a particular theory at all? How can ESL teachers obtain transferable information about language, about grammar, which can be applied to classroom presentation? Where can they find a good pedagogical grammar? While there are some pedagogical grammars (texts) available, what about explication?

One of the most useful presentations of language is that of Robert Allen's Sector Analysis, which provides a means by which a language teacher can see and present language in such a manner that students can understand and use it. Sector Analysis does not pretend to offer any new or unique insights into language, nor is it a "grammar" of English.

Sector Analysis provides a basic understanding of the system of sentence formation within the context of either dialogue or composition (Allen 1964), which at a very basic level provides clear and understandable directions on sentence formation for students and teachers.

Three things are particularly important in order to be able to acquire the kind of information about English that will allow for the kind of confidence necessary to teach it to limited English speakers. First, a knowledge of the sound system of English and how these sounds are articulated in the context of the spoken language (in sentences, not just in words) is necessary so that students can be shown how to make sounds, how to discriminate between various sounds, and how to practice and produce accurate pronunciation in appropriate communication situations. This should include a complete understanding of the stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns used in English as well (Allen & Haskell 1978).

Second, a knowledge of how words are formed and how they are related to each other as used in various categories is an invaluable skill for the language teacher and language student. How to guess meaning from context, how to "psych out" a word's meaning from the various parts (morphemes) which make it up, are basic skills necessary for reading and word acquisition. An understanding of meaning, both connotative and denotative, and of the multitudinous situational, social, and regional uses of words is basic to an understanding of language use.

Third, an understanding of word order in English, not only of words written in phrases and clauses and in whole sentences, but also in the ordering of sentences within spoken dialogue and written work is necessary. It is in this last area that Sector Analysis, or X-word grammar as it is also known, is most useful.

What follows is a very general introduction to some of the basic notions of grammar as organized and presented in Sector Analysis. Two cautions should be made before anything further is said about Sector Analysis. This is a very skeletal look at what Robert Allen called Sector Analysis. Second, as with all real usage, even usage appropriate to the classroom, common sense needs to be applied with any explanations or discussions. X-word grammar does not deny the complexity of acceptable language which may occur when used by native or second language speakers. It is not so much a theory of language as a means of discovering some of its basic principles as generally applied—principles which can easily and clearly be discussed and presented in the classroom (Allen, et al. 1967). It offers the most efficient and economical chance for stu-

dents and teachers to gain the initial confidence necessary to succeed in their roles as teachers and learners.

Basically, X-word grammar involves two notions that are immediately helpful to students. One is that English is made up of words which are groupable by function (in somewhat different ways than the traditional eight parts of speech). The second is that English sentences are made up of "sectors," identifiable slots (parts, positions, places) into which these (for the most part listable) groups of words can be put. Sector Analysis is, according to Allen, "construct-oriented" and "it is a grammar of written English rather than of spoken English." As he further points out, "students, by and large, write 'the way they speak.' Teachers, on the other hand, tend to judge composition against the standards of edited written English" (Allen, et al. 1968). The basic notions of Sector Analysis as a means of teaching 'edited written English' are equally valid for today's ESL and English classes which must deal with spoken and written forms at the same time.

## WORD ORDER

According to Sector Analysis' definition of a sentence, all English sentences contain a subject and a verb, and always in that order, and all English sentences contain an X-word, one of a group of 23 words in English which are used, among other things, to make yes/no questions, and ultimately *wh-* questions as well.

While it is only one of the signals of meaning in language, word order is the most important feature of sentence production in English. Take, for example, the sentence heard by many a mother: "Mommy, Mommy! Him hit I" (Harsh 1968). While the strict interpretation of the pronouns in this sentence would suggest otherwise, any "mommy," any native speaker, knows that the child has just said that some boy has hit him.

In the chart *The Order of Elements in Noun Clusters* (see table on next page), Allen tries to show the fairly fixed order of elements that surround the "nucleus" or basic element in a noun phrase (here called noun cluster). He uses as his example the sentence "Her last two lovely, large, round, blue, French glass ink bottles with the silver tops which are standing on the table. . . ."

Sector Analysis is based, in large part, on the ordering of the sectors or slots, and the groups of words that may fill those slots, in a sentence. While these slots are not absolute, they are for the most part stable, as we shall see below.

In transformational-generative terms this notion is stated as

$$S \rightarrow NP + VP,$$

S (sentence) → (is written as) NP (noun phrase) + (plus) VP (verb phrase). This definition requires a broader interpretation of "sentence" and "subject" than traditional grammar has heretofore allowed. Below we will look at this word order as it relates to sector analytical definition and use.

## The Order of Elements in Noun Clusters

after Robert L. Allen

**determiner**.....*her*

**numerals**
- ordinal.....*last*
- cardinal.....*two*

**descriptive adjectives**
- opinion.....*(very) lovely*
- size.....*(very) large*
- shape.....*(very) round*
- color.....*(very) blue*

**adjectival of place of origin**.....*French*

**noun adjuncts**
- made of.....*glass*
- used for.....*ink*

**nucleus**.....*bottles*

**(prepositional) phrase**.....*with the silver tops*

**(adjectival) clause**.....*which are standing on the table*

(1) Note that descriptive adjectives may themselves be modified by adjective modifiers, called intensifiers in Sector Analysis (called adverbs which modify adjectives in traditional grammar). The most common intensifier is the word *very*. Conversationally the word *pretty* is often used. Descriptive adjectives may also be modified by qualifiers such as *more* and *most*. Colors may even be preceded by such terms as *light, dark, pale,* etc.

(2) Determiners always come first in a noun cluster (nominal or noun phrase) when they occur. The most common determiners are the articles *(a, an,* and *the)* and possessive pronominals (possessive pronouns in traditional grammar). Note that possessive pronominals may substitute for a complete noun phrase. For example, for *her* in the example above, substitute the words 'my blond Swedish cousin's . . .'

(3) Note that postnominal modification is of three types: the plural morpheme {s}; prepositional phrases (almost any number: *with the silver tops, on the table by the door, next to the picture of my mother,* etc.); and adjective clauses (which themselves may contain any number of prepositional phrases).

(4) Of course additional modifiers can be added even to this fairly stable ordering. One could use *and* with almost any of the pre-nucleus modifiers, thus compounding the element (e.g. *blue and green* or *round and classically sculptured).* And one can further modify any of the elements (e.g. *blue striped* or *fairly lovely* or *nearly round).* One could even add a possessive element before the nucleus as in *Her last two . . . blue French glass ink bottle's covers, with the silver . . .,* which changes the nucleus to *covers* (as in 'lids') and makes *bottle's* a noun plus its possessive modifier. Students may enjoy playing with this kind of word order discovery technique by finding examples of such order in already written sentences, and in the process of making up their own.

We need first to deal with the idea of "sectors" since the discussion of English grammar, *vis-à-vis* Sector Analysis, revolves around the sectors or slots which make up a linear English sentence, and the ordering of those slots. English is divided into two general categories of words: lexical words, those which are defined primarily by their meaning and which we call, categorically, nouns and verbs, adjectives and adverbs, and which are open categories, too large to be easily listable; and function words, those words which are defined primarily according to the kinds of slots which they fill, the functions that they serve in the sentence. Function words make up closed categories which can generally be easily listed. This will also be true in Sector Analysis. For example, we will talk about X-words, linkers, includers, modifiers, prepositions, and adverbs; and about such slots as those which may contain verbals, nominals, adjectivals, clauses, adverbials, phrases, and inserts (Allen 1972a).

It is perhaps important to note here that while a seemingly new set of labels are being used to categorize words, this is done only to clarify the function of each group of words, and for that reason they will not be difficult to recognize. More traditional category names for words evoke too many incorrect or incomplete definitions.

## THE X-WORD

Since the value of Sector Analysis is on the one hand a means of defining a sentence, let us first look at that crucial notion or element which helps us to define or put into order the other sectors of a sentence: the X-word. As Kunz (1977) describes them, "the X-words are beautiful starter and focal points in the grammar, first because they are ubiquitous in English and form a unique and very tidy category, second because students already know them although they have never looked at them as a category, and third because many basic writing students' problems show up right around the X-word positions: subject-verb agreement, negation, word order, tense, missing or repeated subjects, verb forms and certain kinds of fragments."

X-words in English are a small group of words which serve the same function; namely to introduce yes/no questions. They are a group of twenty-three words which traditional grammar variously calls modals, auxiliaries, and linking verbs: *am, is, are, was, were; have, has, had; do, does, did; will, shall, can, would, should, could, may, might, must,* and occasionally *ought (to), need,* and *dare.* As Kunz (1977) puts it, "X-words, like a number of other categories of function words, need never be defined for students; they are simply part of a closed list of . . . items. Four of them—*is, was, has, does*—are used with the third person singular which has given many students such headaches, and

these four conveniently end in the letter *-s*. None of the other . . . X-words do. Each X-word dictates, without exception, the form of any verb following it. The only five X-words that offer any choice of verb are *am, are, is, was, were* and this very limited choice represents the important difference between active and passive voice, for example *is eating* versus *is eaten."*

It is important to remember the following things about X-words: (1) They occur explicitly or implicitly in all English sentences. (2) They occur between the subject of the sentence and the verb (exclusive of the positions for negatives and middle adverbs which also occur between the subject and the verb but which are easily defined and recognized as such, and not as X-words). (3) X-words shift around the subject of the sentence, from their "middle" position in the sentence (between subject and verb) to a "front" position (in front of the subject) in order to make yes/no questions (questions which are answered by *yes* and *no).* (4) They must also be shifted to the front position in order to make *wh-* questions (questions which begin with *wh-* words: *what, when, whom, why, where, whose, who,* and *how),* questions that ask for information. (5) And other functions notwithstanding, they must not be confused with those words which themselves act as verbs: *have, has, had, do, does,* and *did,* or those words which, in Sector Analysis, are called middle auxiliaries: *be, being, been,* and *have* (Kunz 1978b), or the auxiliaries *have to, used to, having,* and *going to* (Allen, et al. 1968), none of which function as X-words—that is, shift to make yes/no questions. These middle auxiliaries occur between an X-word and a verb and in some grammars are called preverbal modifiers.

**(1) They occur in all English sentences.**

Since X-words are a small list, they are easily recognizable. The test used to find them or to identify them when more than one occurs in a sentence or where none seem to be present, is either to change the sentence to a yes/no question, in which case the X-word will automatically shift to the front position; change the sentence to a negative, which will require an X-word, usually before or attached to the negative 'not' *(does not, cannot, won't);* or change the sentence to an emphatic form (putting the stress on the X-word) in which case the X-word will also, magically, appear between the subject and the verb.

Examples:

(a) Bob is happy. Is he happy?
S X X S

(b) He can swim. Can he swim?
S X V X S V

(c) He and John should swim. — Should they swim?
s x v — x s v

(d) He swims every day. — He doesn't swim every day.
s v — s x v

He DOES swim every day.
s x v

Note: Throughout this discussion, examples will be accompanied by the following symbols: s = subject, x = X-word, v = verb; stressed words or syllables will be capitalized.

**(2) X-words occur between the subject and the verb in a sentence.**

When the X-word acts as a linking verb *(am, is, are, was, were)*, the shift is the same but the verb is not repeated. In all other cases, the X-word shifts, leaving the subject and verb in place.

Examples:

(a) Bob is happy. — Is he happy?
s x — x s

(b) He will come. — Will he come?
s x — x s

(c) He ought to come. — Ought he to come?
s x — x s

Note that the *to* does not shift; also note that Americans are more likely to say *Should he come?*

(d) He ate dinner late. — Did he eat dinner late?
s v — x s v

Verbs revert to the dictionary form (finite, timeless) in a question. In a sentence which uses the "s-form" of the verb (third person singular) or the past tense and the X-words *does* and *did*, the verb will have to be changed to the dictionary form in the question.

Examples:

(e) He likes ice cream. — Does he like ice cream?
s v — x s v

(f) He liked ice cream. — Did he like ice cream?
s v — x s v

(g) He ate ice cream. — Did he eat ice cream?
s v — x s v

This is not the case with other verb forms.

Examples:

(h) He can't have gone yet. — Can't he *have gone* yet?

(i) He has been sleepy all day. — Has he *been sleepy* all day?
s x v — x s v

(j) He will be sleeping for hours. — Will he *be sleeping* for hours?
s x v — x s v

(k) He has had three pieces. — Has he *had* three pieces?
s x v — x s v

(l) He is being given an injection. — Is he *being given* an injection?
s x v — x s v

Note: The negative may stay in its slot between the subject and the verb. When used in a contracted form it may shift with the X-word or not. Americans prefer the use of the contracted form while the British prefer the uncontracted form.

Examples:

(m) Doesn't he like ice cream?
x s v

(n) Does he not like ice cream?
x s v

Note: Middle adverbs, those adverbs of frequency which generally occur between the subject and the verb, also may, in statements, occur on either side of the X-word, though many feel they occur more naturally after the X-word rather than in front of it. Middle adverbs are generally omitted from questions unless they are the important (stressed) element in the question and the speaker wants to restrict the answer. Note, too, that *ever* is generally used in questions asking about the frequency of something.

Examples:

(o) Does he eat ice cream?
x s v

(p) Does he *usually* eat ice cream?
x s v

(q) Doesn't he *usually* eat ice cream?
x s v

(r) Doesn't he *ever* eat ice cream?
x s v

(s) Does he *ever* eat ice cream?
x s v

**(3) X-words shift around the subject of the sentence to make a yes/no question.**

This property will help us to locate any subject in any sentence—to define the term and parameters of "subject." Note that the subject may be, and often is, more than a single noun (nucleus, in Sector Analysis). It

may also be, for example, a nominal (noun phrase): the nucleus (main noun) and all its modifiers.

Examples:

(a) He is happy.
s x

Is he happy?
x s

(b) *The man* is happy.
s x

Is *the man* happy?/Is he happy?
x s x s

(c) *The three-headed man* is happy.
s x

Is *the three-headed man* happy?/Is he happy?
x s x s

(d) *The three-headed Frenchman with the green hair and the broken nose who is climbing in my window right now* is happy.
s x

Is *the three-headed Frenchman with the green hair and the broken nose who is climbing in my window right now* happy?/Is he happy?
x s x s

The subject, then, is defined in Sector Analysis as everything that occurs between the two X-word slots, that is, (1) the slot between the subject and the verb, used in statements, and (2) the slot at the front of the sentence to which it shifts when making a yes/no question.

Note that the entire subject (nominal)—the nucleus and all of its pre- and postmodifiers—may be substituted by a pronominal (in traditional grammar a pronoun). In the last example above, the nominal *the three-headed Frenchman with the green hair and the broken nose who is climbing in my window right now* can be substituted in both the statement and the question with the pronominal *he*.

The shifting of the X-word also occurs in the "tag" of tag-questions (and their rhetorical twins).

Examples:

(e) He is coming, isn't he? (is he not?)
s x v x s

(f) The baby likes ice cream, doesn't she?
s v x s

(g) The baby doesn't like ice cream, does he?
s x v x s

(h) It's raining, isn't it?
s x v x s

(i) You're not deaf, are you?
s x x s

**(4) Wh- questions also require the shifting of the X-word.**

When forming information questions (called *wh-* questions in Sector Analysis because the questions begin with words beginning with *wh-*, *how* having somehow historically dropped its *w)*, the X-word must also first be located and then shifted around the subject of the sentence before the *wh-* word can be affixed. That is to say, the word order of a *wh-* question is the same as it is in a yes/no question (X-word, subject, verb).

Examples:

(a) The *man in the grey hat* likes ice cream.
s v

Does *the man in the grey hat* like ice cream?
x s v

What does *the man in the grey hat* like? (Ice cream.)
x s v

(b) He is going to school.
s x v

Is he going to school?
x s v

When is he going to school?
x s v

Where is he going? (To school.)
x s v

It is extremely important for the teacher and the student to note that this word order for questions (X-word, subject, verb) is often confused with that of those dependent clauses which begin with *wh-* words but which have the same word order as a statement (subject, X-word, verb). Students need to have this difference pointed out so that they can produce both forms correctly and not confuse them.

Examples:

(c) When is he going to school?
x s v

(When he is going to school), he is happy.
s x v s x

(d) I don't know (what time it is).
s x v s x

What time is it?
x s

Note: Students are not only confused by lack of knowledge of the different word order for question and statement (or "answer," if you will) but by the fact that English has so many polite ways of asking questions, especially, which use dependent or adverbial clauses rather than the *wh*-question form.

Examples:

(e) Please tell me (what time it is)?
s x

(f) Can you tell me (what time it is)?
s x

It should further be pointed out that there are exceptions to the shifting of the X-word (to the front) in *wh*-questions (Malkemes 1982). In one case the X-word cannot shift because the front position is empty (that is, the *wh*- word is used not only to mark the question, but acts as the subject "filler" as well).

Examples:

(g) Who will investigate the matter?
s x v

(h) What can remedy the problem?
s x v

(i) What happened? (What's happening?)
s v s x v

(j) What's going on? (present time only)
s x v

(5) Do not confuse the X-words ***have, has, had, do, does,*** and ***did*** with their verb counterparts.

Examples:

(a) He did the washing today.
s v

He didn't do the washing
s x v
today.

He DID do the washing today.
s x v

Did he do the washing today?
x s v

(b) *The red-haired girl* didn't do
s x v
her homework.

Didn't *the red-haired girl* do
x s v
her homework?

(c) He doesn't have a dime.
s x v

Doesn't he have any money?
x s v

(d) He has had a lot of time to
s x v
think about it.

Has he had enough time to
x s v
think about it?

(e) He hasn't got a dime.
s x v

Hasn't he got any money?
x s v
(Doesn't he have any money?)
x s v

INCLUDERS (Clause introducers)

A clause in Sector Analysis is the same as a dependent clause in traditional grammar (Subject + X-word + verb word order). It has the same word order as a sentence but is generally introduced by a "clause marker" or includer. Clauses are defined in Sector Analysis according to their functions: a noun clause may substitute for a noun or nominal; an adjective clause functions as a modifier of a noun; and an adverbial clause modifies a verb.

Some common includers (Allen, et al. 1975) are:

**Adverbial includers:** *after, although, as, because, before, of, in case, now (that), once, since, so (that), though, till, unless, until, whatever, when, whenever, whether, while*

**Nominal includers:** *how, if, that, what, whatever, when, where, whether, which, whichever, who, whoever, whom, whose, why*

**Adjectival includers:** *after, as, before, such as, then, that, till, until, when, where, which, who, whom, whose*

A. An included noun clause acts as (1) the subject of the sentence, (2) the object of the verb, or (3) the object of a preposition.

Examples:

1. (a) *Who she was* is a mystery to me.
s x

(b) *What they wear* is their business.
s x

(c) *That she is so beautiful and I can't have her* annoys me.
s v

2. (a) I don't know *who she is.*
s x v

(b) I have *what he wants.*
s v

(c) He gave *what I wanted* to her.
s v

3. (a) I'll give it to her in *whatever size she asks for.*
s x v

(b) He gave it to *whoever wanted it.*
s v

(c) The specialist in *what ails you* is Dr. Smith.
s x

B. An included adjective clause modifies a noun. It occurs after the noun it modifies. (It is often called an appositive in traditional grammar. It may also act as an "insert" or parenthetical expression—see below.)

Examples:

1. The man *who came to dinner* stayed too long.
s v

2. The place *where he sat* is now a hallowed shrine.
s x

3. I like a man *who can think.*
s v

Note: The included adjective clause is part of the nominal that is replaced when a pronominal is used. Using the same sentences:

1. He (the man who came to dinner) stayed too long.
s v

2. It (the place where he sat) is now a hallowed shrine.
s x

3. I like (a man who can think) him. (I like that kind of man.)
s v

C. An included adverbial clause acts like any adverbial; that is, it modifies the verb (or sentence) to which it refers, generally supplying information on time *(before, after, while,* and the like), or explanation *(because, if, although, unless,* and the like) (Allen 1972b). In Sector Analysis it is one kind of shifter (Allen, et al. 1975); that is, it may occur at either end of the sentence (in Sector Analysis the front slot or the end slot) and is generally shiftable to either spot without changing the meaning of the sentence. Sometimes this shift is not possible because it sounds awkward, though the meaning may not change. Sometimes a shift to the front slot will be made for emphasis, or to the end slot to deemphasize.

Examples:

1. If she comes, I go. — I (will) go, if she comes.
s v

2. Because he is hirsute, I like him. — I like him because he is hirsute.
s v

Note: Adverbial clauses that occur in the front position should be shifted to the end slot when making a question.

## SHIFTERS (adverbs and adverbials)

We have stated above that the function of an adverb or adverbial (or adverbial clause) in Sector Analysis is to modify a verb. (Those items, then, which traditional grammar calls adverbs but which modify adjectives will be separated into a group of words called adjective modifiers, or modi-modifiers—words such as *very, pretty, more, most,* and the like. These are called INTENSIFIERS in Sector Analysis.)

There are three basic slots or sectors for verb modifiers. The shifters are those that fill two of these slots, the *front* and the *end* slots, which we mentioned above in our discussion of adverbial clauses.

Examples:

| | |
|---|---|
| (a) Yesterday I wasn't ready. | I wasn't ready yesterday. |
| s x | s x |
| (b) In the morning I like tea. | I like tea in the morning. |
| s v | s v |

While as a general rule these two slots are interchangeable, the native speaker, in some contexts, may feel that one place is more appropriate than the other, or that it sounds "funny" in one of the slots. This will be particularly true of short sentences, which may be or may seem to be elliptical, or when a middle adverb (of frequency) occurs in the end slot.

Examples:

| | |
|---|---|
| (a) I want to go now. | Now I want to go. |
| s v | s v |
| (b) I went yesterday. | Yesterday I went. |
| s v | s v |
| (c) I went to school yesterday. | Yesterday I went to school. |
| s v | s v |
| (d) I went there already. | Already, I went there. |
| s v | s v |
| | (Not generally felt to be appropriate, but how about: *"Usually* I go there.") |

Prepositional phrases may also act as shifters, but usually occur in front position, stylistically, only when special emphasis is required.

Examples:

| | |
|---|---|
| (a) I went to school in the morning. | In the morning I went to school. |
| s v | s v |
| (b) I went to the door. | Up the chimney he rose. |
| s v | s v |
| (c) I went to work in a snit. | In a daze, I wandered the streets. |
| s v | s v |

The third slot for adverbs is that for middle adverbs (adverbs of frequency). This slot comes between the subject and the verb, generally after the X-word.

The most commonly occurring middle adverbs are *always, regularly, usually, generally, often, frequently, sometimes, occasionally, rarely, seldom, hardly ever, scarcely ever,* and *never.*

Examples:

(a) He is usually home by midnight.
S X

(b) He usually is home by midnight.
S X

(c) He is usually not home until midnight.
S X

(d) He is not (isn't) usually home until midnight.
S X

Note: Some middle adverbs may occasionally occur as end adverbs; for example, *sometimes* frequently does.

## PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions make up a category of words which introduce phrases. It should be noted that prepositions are difficult to learn to use correctly because we use them so arbitrarily and inconsistently from dialect to dialect. For example, while most American speakers say *standing in line,* New Yorkers say *standing on line* (and British speakers *queue up).*

Phrases are nominals (noun phrases) introduced by prepositions and which, as we have suggested before, may be made up of a single noun (nucleus) or a noun and its modifiers, a noun substitute (pronominal), or a nominalization (noun clause, gerund, prepositional phrase).

Examples:

(a) He is *at home.*
(b) He is *in the house.*
(c) He is *in it.*
(d) He is *in the green house.*
(e) He is *in the house with the broken windows.*
(f) He has been *in since 9 o'clock.*

Note: In example (f) the preposition *(in)* is part of an elliptical phrase and cannot be used unless the listener understands what has been left out: for example, that it means *in his office* or the like. *In,* in this case, could also mean a number of other things such as "popular," "a winner"—*It was the*

*in thing to do; he is in with everyone.* Clearly, again, the use of prepositions is complex and the learning of them even more so.

(g) He came *from under the table.*

Note: The NP *the table* is in a prepositional phrase introduced by another preposition. *Under the table* is embedded in the phrase, probably elliptical, "from (someplace) under the table."

(h) He is interested *in studying Mayan culture.*

Prepositions are members of a closed list. These same words are called particles when they are part of two- or three-word verbs, which as semantic units probably have meanings quite different from the more common meanings of the two parts separately (Malkemes 1982).

Examples:

(a) I will *turn off* the light.
(b) She *caught up* (to me at the bus stop).
(c) He *came up against* a lot of opposition to his plan.

Prepositions are either a part of a verb as in *turn on, give up,* etc., or as in *turn (him) on, give (it) up* (with totally different meanings), etc.; or as introducers of prepositional phrases. Clearly it is a problem of too few prepositions for too many notions (functions), and for the most part they must be learned one by one. Prepositions and their use is a fairly complex issue about which various linguists and grammarians have their own theories. For further reading see Feare (1980), Hook (1981), and Wiener (1958).

## LINKERS

Up to this point we have suggested that X-words act as noun phrase markers, yes/no question introducers, and predicate or verb introducers. We have also said that includers introduce clauses and that prepositions introduce phrases. *Linkers* are those words in Sector Analysis which introduce sentences within a sequence of sentences such as a dialogue, or in writing a paragraph. They provide transitions from one sentence or piece of information to another. They are usually separated by a comma and may occur sentence-finally as well as at the beginning of a sentence. Examples of linkers are *furthermore, in addition, moreover, besides, however, nevertheless, at any rate, even so, still, therefore, for this reason, consequently, as a result, hence, thus, on the other hand, on the contrary, in contrast, otherwise, in conclusion, after all, in fact, indeed, actually, apparently, certainly, conversely, fortunately, obviously, undoubtedly, unfortunately, in other words, of course.*

Some linkers are in a subcategory called sequence signals, that is, words which by their nature suggest that other parallel sentences or thoughts will follow or have preceded. This category contains such words as *first, second, next, then, gradually, eventually, finally, ultimately, consequently,* etc. These linkers generally occur without a comma (Kunz 1977).

Linkers should not be confused with that list of words we call conjunctions (*joiners,* in X-word grammar) which act as sentence combiners and are used in parallel construction, such as *and, but, yet, or, for, so,* and *nor* (Kunz 1977).

## INSERTS

The notion of inserts suggests that sentences, particularly those which are orally constructed, are often embedded with information in ways other than compounding (using *and, or, but, nor,* etc.) or by verbal or nominal modification. Rather, information is inserted between major sectors of a sentence, and independent of the constraints of "sentence" except that they may occur only between sectors. We often refer to them as parenthetical expressions in writing, and they are generally separated by commas, parentheses, or dashes. They are referred to in traditional grammar as nonrestricted clauses, appositives, and the like. Note the inserted information (italicized) in this sentence:

> He said, *if you get my drift,* that he had, *in that very special way he has of doing things,* written an epistle *(letter)* to his dying—*at least we thought so at the time*—mother.

## THE VERB SYSTEM

The verb system as described in Sector Analysis is best described by Robert Allen himself (1972b). The chart following is a simplified version of time relationships from an article by Lynn Henrichsen (1977) and a short version of Allen's grammar is reprinted in Paulston (1973).

**Past**

| earlier | same | later |
|---|---|---|
| *had* | *did* (or some past form such as *was, were,* etc.) | *would* *was going* *were to* |

**Present**

| earlier | same | later |
|---|---|---|
| *have* *has* | *do* *does* (or some present form such as *is, am, are,* etc.) | *will* *shall* *am going* *is to* |

## TENSES

English has two times—*present* and *past*—and three time relationships—*earlier time, same time,* and *later time.* Time relationships are always comparative and therefore occur only in reference to another tense, mostly in compound or complex sentences; they may, however, occur in either main or subordinate clauses.

## THE PRINCIPAL PARTS OF THE VERB

The principal or main parts of the verb are so called because from them all tenses can be formed with the help of auxiliaries (X-words). Three of the principal parts are not placed in time; the other three are.

| | **Not Placed in Time** | |
|---|---|---|
| *Base Form* | *D-T-N Form* | *-ing Form* |
| infinitive | past participle | present participle |
| *to go* | *gone* | *going* |
| *to walk* | *walked* | *walking* |
| | **Placed in Time** | |
| *The No-S Form* | *The S Form* | *The Past Form* |
| present | present—3rd person | |
| *I go* | *he goes* | *he went* |
| *I walk* | *he walks* | *he walked* |

Note: D-T-N refers to the participle forms which end in D *(watched, understood,* etc.), T *(sent, hit,* etc.), and N *(gone, written,* etc.), as well as *come* and *become.*

Except in the present and past forms, the time carrier is always a helping verb or auxiliary (the X-word). The X-words may or may not carry a semantic meaning, but they always serve to place the verb in time. Remember that a time-oriented verb must have a subject; other verb forms *may* have a subject, but need not.

Examples:

He went *walking.*
When one is *walking* on the Thames, one gets nostalgic.
They ordered sandwiches but were *gone* before they ate them.
I would like *to go* to the movies.

## BOINGUAGE

Allen suggests the use of "Boinguage" (Allen, et al. 1968) as a means of helping students focus on the form, the construction of a sentence, free of

"content" words and meaning. In Boinguage, the word *boing* is substituted for "content" words while "function" words and functional inflections (punctuation, articles, pronouns, inflected endings, and the like) remain.

Example:

The Boing was boinging when he boinged his boing.
s x v s v

The student can identify the subject and verb in this sentence and in the adverbial clause *(when he boinged his boing).* The capital letter on the first "Boing" suggests that it is a proper noun or name, something that would normally be capitalized in English. The student is asked to create similar sentences, substituting "boings" for content words. He thus is able to practice using the "grammar," the word order, the order of constructions, the use of syntactical markers (punctuation, inflection, function words, capitalization, and the like), creating sentences using basic forms.

In another technique designed especially for X-word practice, Allen uses the verb phrase *wuggle the wumps.* In this case the "drill" occurs when the teacher asks yes/no questions using a variety of X-words and asks the student to respond with a short answer *(yes* or *no* plus the pronominal and X-word; for example, *yes, I can; No, she couldn't).*

Examples:

Can you wuggle the wumps? No, I can't.
Shouldn't she wuggle the wumps? Yes, she should.
May I wuggle the wumps? Yes, you may. (No, you may not.)

And so on. This is a very fast drill or practice. The students focus only on which X-word occurs in the question; the content of the sentence—the meaning, other than that offered by the X-words and pronouns—is static. It is an excellent practice for those students, for example, who answer everything with *Yes, it is* (e.g., Are they happy? *Yes, it is;* Did they come? *Yes, it is;* Do you like ice cream? *Yes, it is),* or who make sentences such as "She's coming Thursday, isn't it?" The student need only, in this kind of Boinguage practice (or wuggle-the-wumps practice, if you prefer), focus on the yes/no question word and supply the appropriate short response. Once taught, it is an excellent review technique and can fill in when five minutes are available at the end of a class or between lessons.

WHILE X-WORD GRAMMAR may not satisfy the linguists' need for a theory of language or even serve as a satisfactory model for a discussion of syntax, the notions provide the classroom language teacher with a more

secure feeling and understanding of how students can be taught. Almost as important are the "tests" which the use of X-words and slots provide the student in determining accurate sentence construction. An interesting list of such "discovery techniques" can be found in Kunz (1977).

The problems of prepositions, the loss of the perfective in the repertoire of many speakers, and the growing use of the *-ing* forms in previously restricted settings are only a few of the areas which are not resolved by X-word grammar any better than by other approaches, but the beginnings of understanding in these areas are presented in terms that are not overwhelming to the student and which are applicable, understandable, and usable with beginning and intermediate ESL levels. As Linda Kunz points out, X-word grammar is "efficient, economical, and relatively easy for most students to learn."

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