University of Tikrit

College of Education for Humanities

Department of English

Structure classes:

Qualifiers, Prepositions, and

Determiners

Grammar

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Structure classes in English

Structure-class words, sometimes called function words, are words that signal how the form-class words (sometimes referred to as "content words") relate to each other in a sentence. There are far fewer structure-class words than form-class words; but there are no easy formal tests to identify them, and, since they themselves help determine function, functional tests are of limited value. In general, it is necessary to memorise lists of words that belong to the various parts of speech in the structure-class category.

1. Qualifiers:

Prototypical qualifiers usually precede adjectives or adverbs in order to decrease or increase the quality signified by the words they precede. For example:

> Before a big test, it matters if you're *a little bit* nervous, *quite* nervous, or *very, very* nervous.

Some prototypical qualifiers can be phrasal: *a bit, kind of, a little*. The most common qualifiers include very, quite, pretty, less, least, rather, somewhat, more, most, too, so, just, enough, indeed, still, almost, fairly, really, even, a bit, a little, a (whole) lot, a good deal, a great deal, kind of, sort of.
Qualifiers can be flexible in form, encompassing nouns, adjectives, adverbs, or phrases, and they serve to modify or intensify other words (e.g., adjectives, adverbs, or even whole phrases).

1. Noun phrase as qualifier:
   - The table was only inches wide.
     Here, "only inches" modifies "wide," indicating degree.
2. Adjective as qualifier:
   - The water is boiling hot.
     "Boiling" intensifies "hot."
3. Adjective phrase as qualifier:
   - My dress seems lighter blue than yours.
     "Lighter blue" modifies the color comparison.
4. Adverb as qualifier:
   - You did fairly well.
     "Fairly" modifies the adverb "well."

2. Prepositions:

Prepositions are words like *of, in,* and *to* which are usually followed by a noun, noun phrase, personal pronoun, or noun-substitute called the object of the preposition. The unit of preposition-plus-object of preposition is called a prepositional phrase.

Examples:

- George sat *between* the two deans.
- George jumped *on* it.
- George went *from* this *to* that.

English has a small group of prepositions, of which the most frequently used ones are *at, by, for, from, in, of, on, to*, and *with*. Those in greatest use are, in order of frequency, *of, in,* and *to*. These one-syllable prepositions usually have weak or third stress in their common uses. Prepositions convey relationships of time, place, and manner. Certain prepositions are *phrasal*: that is, two or more words that stand in for one (e.g. *according to*).

One difficulty many students have is that prepositions can have the same form as some adverbs. Compare *I was playing inside the dorm* to *I was playing inside*. In the first sentence *inside* is a preposition because it is followed by a noun phrase; therefore *inside the dorm* is a prepositional phrase. In the second sentence the word *inside* just modifies the verb; it has no object.

In addition to the prepositions already mentioned, there is in English a group of -ing prepositions that all have a verb as a stem. Here are some of the more common:

(assuming, beginning, barring, concerning, considering, hurting, following, including, involving, pending, regarding, succeeding) Examples:

- *Considering* your loss, the bill will not be sent.
- *Assuming* the accuracy of the report, action must be taken at once.
- We will delay the papers, *pending* arrival of the contract.

1. -ing prepositions are derived from verbs (e.g., *consider* → *considering*).

2. They function like traditional prepositions, introducing phrases that modify clauses.
3. Common in formal or legal contexts (e.g., *pending*, *regarding*).

The final group is composed of compound prepositions. These are relatively numerous and of various types. Often it is difficult to say whether a word group should be considered a preposition or not. Here is a short list of two types:

Two-Part Compound Prepositions:

- together with
- contrary to
- ahead of
- due to
- apart from
- up to
- out of
- away from
- up at
- as for
- inside of
- because of
- owing to
- instead of

Compound Prepositions with a Noun:

- on account of
- in spite of
- with regard to
- in advance of
- in front of
- on behalf of
- in place of
- in lieu of
- in addition to
- by way of

3.Determiners:

Determiners are structure-class words that precede and modify nouns both grammatically and lexically. It precedes the noun and serves as a signal that a noun is soon to follow. For example:

- *The* new brick gymnasium

If the noun is preceded by adjectives or other modifiers, the determiner still comes first.

- You let *the cat* out of *the bag*! (The definite article *the* is a determiner.)
- *Your cats* are driving me crazy! (The possessive *your* functions as a determiner.)
- *Cats* will always eat *some tuna*. (The indefinite *some* functions as a determiner for *tuna*, but *cats* does not require a determiner.)

Several different kinds of structure-class words can function as determiners. The prototypical members of the set are the articles: *a/an* and *the*. Any word that can stand in for *a/an* or *the* can be classified as a determiner.
English has two subclasses of the article structure class. The choice of which article to use depends on what knowledge is shared by the speaker or writer and hearer or reader.

a. definite article: *the*

The speaker or writer uses *the* when the hearer or reader knows specifically what is being talked about. *Example: The dog* dug up the bushes. A particular dog that both speaker and hearer know did the digging.

b. indefinite article: *a/an*

The speaker or writer uses *a/an* when it cannot be assumed that the hearer or readers has specific knowledge of what is being talked about. *Example: A dog* dug up the bushes. Some dog that the speaker and hearer do not know did the digging.

c. English has four demonstratives: *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*. Just as with the definite article *the*, demonstratives are used when the speaker/writer and hearer/reader share specific knowledge of what is being talked about.
   - Please wash this car.
   - Please wash that car.
   - Please wash these cars.
   - Please wash those cars.

d. Possessives can serve the function of either determiner or pronoun. When acting as a determiner, possessives precede a noun:
   - my house (1st-person singular)
   - our coursework (1st-person plural)
   - your yard (2nd-person singular and plural)
   - his/her/its hair (3rd-person singular)

References

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