GRAMMAR: THE NAMING OF PARTS

A HANDBOOK OF BASIC DEFINITIONS AND ACTIVITIES

By

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook is intended for all those who are interested in learning about the basic parts of speech in English grammar. Many of you will be adults who were never taught this in school, but who now find that you need to know just what things like conjunctions or adverbs actually are. Many of you will be teachers or student teachers, finding that you have to teach these terms to children, but are not too sure yourself whether you have got it right. Or you may be parents trying to deal with children's questions over their homework. Or you may be a young person yourself wanting some basic information about how the language works.

You will find that there is an introduction, a set of definitions and exercises, and an annotated bibliography. In the introduction I briefly discuss some of the issues around the question of grammar. The set of definitions and activities constitute the main part of the handbook, and are designed as a 'teach yourself' grammar. The bibliography offers suggestions for further reading.

How to Use this Handbook

One of the problems about grammar is that the press and other self-appointed guardians of the language can get very punitive when they think someone has 'got it wrong'. This means that people can become very nervous about 'getting it right'. For precisely that reason by far the best way of using this handbook will be to work with a friend or partner. In this way you can puzzle over the definitions together, debate them between yourselves, and then reassure each other that you *have* got them right.

A second feature of the thinking behind my approach is the fact that we all already have an implicit command of grammar. We couldn't make ourselves understood if we didn't. Whenever we talk or write we are very actively producing grammar and, in the same way as the best way to learn to play tennis is to play tennis, the best way to learn to produce grammar is to produce grammar. For this reason each section contains activities in which you will be invited to do just that, to produce examples of whichever grammatical term we are considering. This is another reason for working in pairs, because in this sort of exercise two heads are infinitely better than one.

Some of what follows is pretty complicated. I have tried to organise the sections as logically as possible so that you can build your knowledge step by step. Don't try to rush it. If all this is totally new to you, don't for goodness sake try to get through the handbook at a sitting. Work through it slowly, and don't go on to the next section until you are sure of the previous ones. The only problem will be that in the early stages you will be producing examples that you cannot fully explain. If you produce something which you cannot explain, put it to one side and come back to it when you get to the section that helps.

You will find I have only covered the basic terms, but I have included a small annotated bibliography which I hope will serve two purposes: the first being to suggest a couple of books to interested readers that will broaden their knowledge and understanding; and

the second, of more specialist interest to teachers, being to review the UK policy documentation which was my initial motivation for writing this handbook in the first place.

Prescriptive and Descriptive Grammar

The word 'grammar' is used in two very distinct ways, prescriptively, and descriptively. *Prescriptively* the term is used to prescribe how language *should* be used; *descriptively* the term is used to describe how the language actually *is* used. Prescriptive grammarians want to *control* the language; descriptive grammarians want to *understand* it.

Prescriptive Grammar

Prescriptive grammarians believe that English grammar is a fixed and un-changing series of rules which should be applied to the language. To judge from the newspaper headlines all journalists and all politicians fall into this category, and many ordinary people and, I fear, lots of teachers share their views. Such people talk about 'good grammar' and 'bad grammar', or 'correct grammar' and 'incorrect grammar', or even 'good English' and 'bad English'. For prescriptive grammarians expressions like: *I ain't done nothing wrong*, or *We was going to the supermarket*, are quite simply wrong, for all that a good chunk of the population use them all the time. To understand this a bit better it is necessary to consider two other related questions that often get muddled up with grammar in the public discourse, and they are the question of *style* and the question of *Standard English*

Style

Many complaints about incorrect grammar are actually complaints about style. Split infinitives are a case in point. There is nothing *grammatically* wrong with a sentence like: *I am hoping to quickly finish writing this paragraph.*, it makes perfect sense, but it might be thought stylistically preferable to write: *I am hoping to finish writing this paragraph quickly.*, or even to write: *I am hoping quickly to finish writing this paragraph.* However if I were to write: **Hoping writing I paragraph finish to quickly am.*, there would be something grammatically wrong with that.
(The asterisk* is a convention used in linguistics to mark an ungrammatical sentence.)

Standard English

An accident of history meant that, when printing developed, the regional dialect that happened to be written down was from the English East Midlands. The fact that it was printed, however, meant that it rapidly established itself as the only written form of English, both within England and across the world, and thus it became the 'standard'. It would thus be more accurate to describe Standard English as the standard *dialect*, or even the 'dominant' dialect, since the word 'dominant' emphasises its political and cultural role. Other dialects, then, are described as 'non-standard'. Importantly, from our point of view, Standard English is distinguished from non-standard dialects by features of vocabulary and features of grammar.

Strictly speaking, Standard English is the written form. However, middle class speech tends to keep some of the grammatical features of the written form, particularly with regard to the use of negatives, and the use of some verb forms. Although in other respects middle class speech, like all speech, is much more grammatically loose than the written language, it is still often thought of as spoken Standard English. It can, incidentally, be spoken in a number of accents.

From the point of view of *prescriptive* grammarians, the grammar of the standard dialect known as Standard English is 'good' or 'correct' grammar, and the grammar of non-standard dialects is 'bad' or 'incorrect' grammar. The most frequent times that children have their language 'corrected' are the times when they use non-standard grammar. So, for example, children who say *I ain't done nothing*, often have their language 'corrected' by their teachers, and even by their own parents, on the ground that it is 'bad grammar', or indeed, more generally, that it is just 'bad English'. The reason for this is not hard to find, since such speech habits are among the most salient of all social class indicators and, as such, tend to come under the closest of cultural scrutiny.

Descriptive Grammar

Descriptive grammarians are not concerned with describing how the language *ought* to be used, they are interested in observing how it actually *is* used, and determining the rules which govern that use. For them, the issue is not whether an utterance is 'correct' or 'incorrect', it is much more a case of whether it is *grammatical* or *ungrammatical*. These rules are not fixed either, they change over time, they change according to geography, they change according to ethnic group, and they change according to class. For example a *descriptive* grammarian will note that a middle class speaker, using the standard dialect known as Standard English, may say: *We were pleased to see you,* and that a working class speaker using a working class cockney dialect may say: *We was pleased to see you*. Both examples are grammatical within their own dialects, both examples make perfect sense, and in neither example is there any ambiguity. The idea that a plural subject takes a plural verb is true only of the middle class standard dialect, not of the working class Cockney dialect. To put it another and more accurate way, the plural form of the verb in middle class standard is *were*, while the plural form of the verb in working class Cockney is *was*. Both examples are rule governed, but the rules are different and the working class cockney speaker can no more say: **Pleased you we see to was*, than can the middle class standard speaker say: **Pleased you we see to were*. Both examples would be ungrammatical.

So What are the Problems?

Grammar is an account of the relationship between words in a sentence. It looks for regular patterns of word use in the language, and gives labels to them. Having said that, some of the relationships are pretty complicated, and describing them is not easy. This handbook does not go beyond the simpler terms and the simpler relationships, and those who want to take the study of grammar further will find in the bibliography a couple of suggestions for where to go to learn more. However, even if we restrict ourselves to the simpler relationships, describing grammar is still not that simple. One of the reasons for this is that the grammatical terms with which we are all familiar, even

if we no longer know what they mean, were derived from Latin, which, in the form that it has come down to us, is an essentially static model of a highly inflected language. (Inflected: words have different endings to indicate different use.) English by contrast is hardly inflected at all, and is not a static language, it is changing all the time. In addition, many of the definitions many of us half remember from our own primary school days – 'a noun is a naming word', 'a verb is a doing word' – such definitions are at best unhelpful and at worst downright misleading. (You will see that I sometimes call such definitions 'trad' grammar – as in 'traditional' grammar.) Though meaning has a part to play in determining the relationship between words, parts of speech are not defined in terms of word meaning, they are defined, rather, in terms of the function of the words within the sentence. This will become clearer as we go through the exercises, but, as an example of what I mean, think about the word *present*.

Present can be a verb: *I **present** you with this tennis racket as a reward for your services*.

Or a noun: *Thank you for my birthday **present**, I've always wanted socks!*

Or an adjective: *In the **present** circumstances I feel unable to proceed*.

If you want another example try *round*.

It can be a noun: *As I felt wealthy, I decided it was my **round.***

Or a verb: *If you call me names, I am very likely to **round** on you and bop you one*.

Or an adjective: *King Arthur designed a **round** table for his knights*.

Or an adverb: *Come **round** for a drink tomorrow*.

Or a preposition: I *shall keep watch **round** the clock*.

These examples may be already taking you beyond what you are sure of. When you have worked though the definitions and exercises which follow, these terms will be a good deal clearer.

Teaching Grammar to Children

It will be clear from the discussion so far that teaching grammar to children can be fraught with problems. Confusion can occur at a number of levels: between prescriptive and descriptive approaches, between questions of grammar proper and questions of style, and around issues of variation between standard and non-standard dialects. Add to that the fact that we all, children and adults alike, need to learn to *write* in the standard form whatever our home dialect, and it will be clear that teachers in particular have a big problem on their hands if they wish to increase learners' *understanding* of what is going on. It is my view that learners can be helped to understand what is going on, and it is also my view that taking a descriptive approach to language use, the approach taken by the science of linguistics itself, will help in fostering that understanding. It is the approach I use in this handbook.

If you are a teacher reading this, a word of advice: this handbook is not designed as a blueprint for teaching grammar to children, particularly not to younger children. Apart from anything else, as I hope I have made clear, disentangling the complexities of the Standard English debate and then further having to disentangle the problems of the 'verb is a doing word' approach to grammar teaching means that teaching grammar to children is no easy matter. Some textbooks do not make the matter any easier, taking the view that grammar is 'the lifeline to literacy'[1],and that a return to grammar teaching

will enable pupils 'to think clearly and express themselves effectively as well as develop their confidence in both speaking and writing.' This is arrant nonsense. All of us use the spoken language effectively and with confidence without recourse to explicit grammatical knowledge, and many of us can write perfectly well too, without ever having learned an iota of explicit grammatical knowledge. Such textbooks also tend not to discuss dialect variation at all, to conflate matters of style with matters of grammar. and to take a prescriptive 'correct English' approach. ([1] I quote from one such.)

My criticisms in the previous paragraph do however leave a question hanging – if we are not teaching grammar to enhance children's production of spoken or written language then why are we teaching it? To answer that question we have to see grammar teaching within the wider resurgence of the more explicit teaching of children about *all* aspects of language and language use. There may be no direct link between grammar teaching and the improvement in children's language use but, though there is as yet not much good research evidence to support such beliefs, the argument is widely made that drawing children's explicit attention to *all* aspects of language use may well be more generally beneficial. It is within that context that grammar itself has its place.
{The less intelligent but perhaps more pertinent answer to the question, of course, is that, if we are a teacher in the UK, it is now national policy that children *should* be taught grammar so we had better get on with it!}

Given all of that, we all know that dry as dust decontextualised old fashioned grammar exercises of the 'underline the noun' variety do not work, and put more children off than they help. Good grammar teaching will instead involve pupils playing with language, and exploring language in ways that are meaningful and most of all, fun. When it comes to interested older pupils it is important that they should be given the opportunity to understand the operation of the language, and I would suggest that the productive approach taken in this handbook is a good approach to take. Pilot versions have been successful with teacher education students and I feel that older pupils who have an interest in language will also benefit from this approach to grammar teaching, so long as it is pursued as part of a wider investigation of language and language use.

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DEFINITIONS & EXERCISES

1. INTRODUCTION

The exercises that follow have been designed to be followed in sequence. Many definitions build on previous ones. Some of you will already know some of this stuff so you can skip sections and go on to the points at which you become uncertain. If you get stuck, my best advice is to go back to the beginning and start again.

2. SENTENCES

The simplest definition of a sentence is that it is a group of words that makes sense on its own. A more formal definition of a sentence might be that it is a group of words constructed according to a set of rules that make it grammatical. *The boy stood on the burning deck.* is a sentence, but **Deck the burning on stood boy the.* is not. What makes the difference is the grammar. **Deck the burning on stood boy the.* does not have the requisite grammatical structure to make sense, so it is not a sentence.

3. SENTENCES: FULL STOPS AND CAPITAL LETTERS

The definition of the sentence often offered to younger children, that it is a group of words with a capital letter at the beginning and a full stop at the end, is misleading, as my second example above shows. Scattering full stops and capital letters about the place will not turn a group of words into a sentence. Organising words so that they make grammatical sense will. Sentences define where the capital letters and full stops will go, not the other way around.

4. SIMPLE & MULTIPLE SENTENCES, & MINOR UTTERANCES

There are simple sentences like *The bus pulled away*. and more complicated sentences or multiple sentences like *The bus pulled away just as I got to the stop*. In order to describe more complicated sentences we will need to talk about clauses, but we will come to them later.

There are also minor utterances, or minor sentences. These are expressions like *Sorry,* or *Hello.*

5. DIFFERENT SENTENCE TYPES

There are four different basic sentence types, statements, questions, commands and exclamations.

I wrote a novel.
Did I write a novel?
Write a novel!
How well I wrote it!

Each of these has their own rules of construction which I shall return to later, but in what follows I shall concentrate on simple statement sentences.

6. SENTENCES: SUBJECTS & VERBS

We have to start with the basic functioning of the sentence since everything else follows from that. At the very simplest level, word order and the position of the word in the sentence tells you a lot about the function of the individual words. So to start at the very beginning, the simplest of sentences tells you something about something:

Charlie lies.

Charlie is the subject of the sentence - what the sentence is about, and *lies* is the verb - telling you about the subject: what the subject is doing.

There are a number of tests we can now run.
We can transpose the word order and see what happens.
We can substitute or omit words and see what happens.
We can expand the sentence and see what happens or, if we are starting with a longer sentence, we can reduce the sentence and see what happens.

So far as position is concerned, in this particular case if we try to transpose the word order, we discover we can't. We cannot say **Lies Charlie.* nor yet **lies* on its own. But what we can do is substitute other words in the same position. And we can expand, adding words.

Keeping *lies* as the verb, we can substitute and expand the subject.

The man lies.
The tall man with the boil on the end of his nose lies.
The girl with the seraphic smile lies.

Or keeping *Charlie* as the subject we can substitute the verb, and we can also add other words to make a fully-fledged predicate.

Charlie swims.
Charlie tells porkies.
Charlie invests in the stock market.

The basic subject verb pattern will remain. As soon as we start to add, complications will arise, but it always remains possible to identify the subject part, and the rest, which will always include the verb. It may well include other words too that are not the verb. In older usage the bit that told you about the subject was known as the predicate. I discuss predicates more fully at 19, below.

ACTIVITIES: *Compose your own simple sentence. Identify subject and verb. Expand the sentence and substitute words seeing if you can continue to identify the subject and the verb, and seeing if you can identify some of the problems.*

7. VERBS

In trad. grammar verbs are called 'doing words' but this definition is only of limited use since:

(a) some of the most common of verbs do not describe actions: the verb *to be* for instance is clearly not a 'doing' word: for example in *Charlie **is** a liar*. where the verb is *is.*

b) lots of words describing actions are not verbs: *explosion, action, arrival*, and even words such as *swimming*, which is usually a verb, is not a verb in a sentence like *Swimming is my favourite sport*.

Verbs are marked by the fact that they change their form depending on whether they refer to the past, the present, the future, or to some hypothetical time. The verb itself will change by adding *ed* on the end, and in some cases these changes will involve the addition of auxiliary verbs. There will be a section on these later.

I explain (present)
*I explain**ed*** (past)
*I **shall** explain* (future)
*I **would have** explain**ed*** (hypothetical)

These changes are known as a changes of tense. Notice that many common verbs form their past tenses in irregular ways.

I write (present)
I wrote (past)
I hit (present)
I hit (past)

In Standard English, verbs are also marked by a change in form depending on whether the subject is singular or plural:

I was going

We were going
He explains
We explain

The singular and plural verb forms vary between standard dialect and many non-standard dialect forms. As an example I quote a leading sports personality who was interviewed on television at the time that I was writing this handbook, and who, when talking about his childhood used the non-standard '*We was a very close family*' rather than the standard *We were a very close family*.
It is these differing standard and non-standard verb forms that are the subject of so much 'correction' of children by parents and teachers.

ACTIVITIES: *Go back to your simple sentence. Substitute different verbs to produce interesting/entertaining/absurd combinations.*

8. NOUNS

In trad. grammar a noun was the name of a person, place or thing. This, however, was to define it in terms of meaning and, as we have already seen, this is misleading. So it is perhaps more helpful at this stage to redefine it more generally as the word which names the subject of the sentence. Thus at its simplest *Charlie* in *Charlie lies* is a noun.
But, as you will have discovered in your expansion exercise, you can expand the subject so that it has lots of words in it, and when this happens it tends to be referred to as the noun phrase. So we can substitute the noun phrase *The man* for *Charlie* to give us *The man lies*. Then we have a main word that is still clearly what the sentence is about, and a little word *The,* known as a determiner, that modifies it, or in some other way describes it.
The determiners *a* and *the* are noun markers and their presence will indicate the presence of a noun. The word *some* is also often a noun marker, as in: *Some men lie.*
Other features of nouns: they change their form, adding *s* to form the plural, though there are exceptions, like *sheep*. They also add 's or s' to form the possessive (sometimes known as the genitive):
The boy's book
The girls' desks
And you will also have discovered that nouns can occur elsewhere in the sentence. However don't panic, we will come to that.

ACTIVITIES: *Start with your simplest sentence again, and expand and or substitute the subject one word at a time. See if you can still identify the noun, and the words that modify or describe it.*

9. COMMON NOUNS AND PROPER NOUNS

While we are on nouns, an important distinction is the distinction between common nouns and proper nouns. Proper nouns refer to specific places or people, or other specific things such as the days of the week or the months of the year. The rest are common nouns.

Proper nouns are distinguished by the fact that they always start with a capital letter: *Caroline, London, Monday.* It is for this reason that the distinction is important at an early stage because the moment children learn to write they need to know where to use capital letters. They are also distinguished by the fact that they can stand on their own within the sentence: So you can say:
***Sheffield** is important.*
but not:
****Town** is important*.
You have to say:
***The town** is important.*
There are exceptions, some common nouns can stand on their own:
***Golf** is important*.
Proper nouns are also distinguished by the fact that they do not take the determiners *a, the* or *some*. You can't say:
****The Liverpool** is large.*
or
****A Clive** is distinguished.*
But once again there are exceptions:
*She arrived on **a Monday**.*
Proper nouns are further distinguished by the fact that they do not form plurals. You can't say **Sheffields* or **Septembers*
Once again there are exceptions:
*I do my serious drinking on **Fridays**.*

ACTIVITIES: *Play around and see how many exceptions you can dream up!*

10. PRONOUNS

You will by now have discovered that you can use little words like *I, you, we, he, she,* or *they* in the sentence, and these are known as pronouns. They behave in many ways just like nouns.

Pronouns generally refer to a previously established noun or noun phrase:

Felicity *was not happy.* ***She*** *had lost her car keys.*

The children on the swings *were enjoying themselves.* ***They*** *had been there all day.*

The word *she* refers back to *Felicity*; the word *they* refers back to *The children on the swings.*

The word *it* can often be an exception to this particular rule:

It *is raining today.*

In other examples, notably *I* and *you,* the context provides the clue to the identity of the pronoun: I have been writing this handbook, for instance, using the convention by which you will not find it difficult to understand that *I* refers to me, the author, and *you* refers to you, the reader.

ACTIVITIES: *If you are not sure about these, play around. Try some of your own*.

11. ADJECTIVES

Adjectives are the easiest. They are often called describing words, and that is very much what they are. In the exercises that you have already done, if you have been the least bit inventive, you will have discovered that you can add words that describe the nouns in your sentences.

The blue man wrote a bad novel.

Blue and *bad* are both adjectives. You will see that they classically occur immediately before the noun they are describing. Another very common place for them is as the complement after the verb *to be*. We will discuss that in due course.

Other features of adjectives:

They have comparative and superlative forms which are formed by adding *er* and *est*:

big, bigger, biggest.

The longer adjectives perform the same function by being modified by *more* or *most:*

important, more important, most important

And don't forget the exceptions, for example:

good, better, best

bad, worse, worst

ACTIVITIES: *Try some of your own*.

12. DETERMINERS

When we were looking at nouns, I mentioned determiners. These include *the* and *a* as well as *some, any, his, her, these* etc. and they relate to or in other ways modify the nearby nouns.

The *man is very tall.*

The woman parked ***her*** *car.*

I don't have ***any*** *mushrooms.*

The words *the*, *her*, and *any* are determiners modifying the nouns *man*, *car*, and *mushrooms* respectively. As I indicated above, the determiners, *the* and *a* in particular, generally act to identify nouns.

It will be seen in a sense that adjectives are determiners too.

ACTIVITIES: *I don't guess this will take too much practice either, so move on if you are happy so far.*

13. PHRASES

Since I have mentioned phrases a couple of times already I better start talking about them properly here. The term phrase is used for a group of words that have the function of a particular part of speech. Thus you can have noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectival phrases, and adverbial phrases. We have already come across noun phrases and we will discuss the rest when we come to them[1].

In the examples we have already come across, above, noun phrases go all the way from: *The man* in: ***The man*** *lies*, to *The tall man with the boil on the end of his nose* in ***The tall man with the boil on the end of his nose*** *lies.*

You will realise already that a noun phrase can contain other parts of speech. To take a somewhat simpler example:

The large blue estate car *was parked on the other side of the road.*

The noun phrase, *the large blue estate car* contains:

a determiner, *the*;

three adjectives, *large blue estate*;

and a noun, *car*.

Phrases are also to be distinguished from clauses and we will see how below at number 33. In the meantime...

ACTIVITIES: *Continue playing around, making up new sentences and seeing if you can identify the noun phrases. So far as phrases and clauses are concerned, if you have produced some puzzling sentences in your examples and you are not quite sure whether you have produced phrases or clauses, put them to one side until you get to the end, and then see if you can sort them out.*

14. SENTENCES AGAIN

We now return to sentences. So far the only features of sentences that we have noted is that they have a subject, what the sentence is about, and a verb, that tells you about the subject. In fact sentences are potentially made up of five elements: subject, verb, object, complement, and adverbial elements. Not many sentences have all five elements. Here is an example with them all:
The choir made Henrietta secretary for the year.
The choir (subject)
made (verb)
Henrietta (object)
secretary (complement)
for the year (adverbial phrase)

(There's a lot of new stuff here, and we shall be looking at it in the next few sections.) The only element that is essential is the verb. Any of the other elements can be omitted and the sentence will still function as a sentence. Commands for instance often consist of just a verb or verb phrase on its own:
Stop!
Don't Walk!

15. DIRECT OBJECT

We will take those new categories one by one. First of all the object.
Verbs come in two basic varieties, those that take an object, and those that take a complement.
The object itself comes in two forms, direct and indirect. In this section we are looking at the direct object. Take the sentence:
The writer wrote a novel.

We know that *writer* is the subject, that which the sentence is about. We are left with *wrote a novel*; *wrote* tells you what the subject did, as well as indicating that the action took place in the past, and so clearly it's the verb proper. And if we

ask what was written then it is clearly *the novel*. This is called the object. We can now run a transposition test, turning the sentence round but keeping the same exact meaning:
The novel was written by the writer.

We have turned the sentence round from being an active sentence – in which the subject does something to something, to being a passive sentence – in which the subject has something done to it. If we can apply this transposition successfully we know that our original sentence was a Subject Verb Object (SVO) sentence. {We will come to active and passive again below.}

The direct object is something or someone directly affected by the action of the verb. There are also indirect objects. These are typically the recipients of the action of the verb. They are in the next section.

ACTIVITIES: *Try lots of these. Think of similar sentences. Transpose them and see if they work and if you can identify the direct object. If you are being inventive you will come across lots of anomalies, but by the time we get to the end we should have accounted for most of these. But in the meantime get this firmly under your belt before proceeding further.*

16. INDIRECT OBJECT

Take the sentence:
The little girl gave the caterpillar to Terence.
We can transpose this in two ways:
The caterpillar was given to Terence by the little girl.
Terence was given the caterpillar by the little girl.

Those transformations indicate that both *Terence* and *the caterpillar* must be objects of the first sentence but they are different sorts of objects. *Caterpillar* is the direct object, what was given, and we call *Terrence* the indirect object, the recipient of the action.
The preposition *to* is the word that indicates this, though we don't have to use the word *to* – we can say *The little girl gave Terence the caterpillar*. We discover that *Terence* is the indirect object by discovering that we can add the word *to* to *Terence* without changing the meaning, whereas if we say *The little girl gave Terence to the caterpillar* we do change the meaning.

ACTIVITIES: *Again, play around, try some of your own. Don't move on until you are sure about what you are doing.*

17. COMPLEMENTS

We have seen that a direct object is directly affected by the action of the verb, and an indirect object is the recipient of the action of the verb. A complement, by contrast, generally adds to the meaning of the subject.

The lion ate the meat. (Subject Verb Object - SVO)

BUT

The lion was angry. (Subject Verb Complement - SVC)

– angry adds to the meaning of *The lion*. By far the most frequent verb to take a complement is the verb *to be* in its various forms: *is*, *was, are* etc. But some other verbs also take complements: *became, feel*, *seem,* for example.

We tested for objects, whether direct or indirect, by discovering that we could turn the sentence on its head without changing the meaning. We thus established that they were SVO sentences. In a Subject Verb Complement (SVC) sentence we can't do this transformation:

The novel was disgusting.

The novel became a best seller.

We can't say:

**Disgusting was the novel.*

nor yet:

**Best seller became the novel*.

More rarely a complement can add meaning to an object:

Listening to Mozart makes Freddy happy.

Subject: *Listening to Mozart*

Verb: *makes*

Object: *Freddy*

Complement: *happy.*

With this particular sentence the complement is needed to complete the sentence. We can reassure ourselves that *Freddy* is the object by running the standard SVO transformation test:

Freddy is made happy by listening to Mozart.

But *happy* is still the complement – the sentence cannot be put through the alternative transposition:

**Happy is made Freddy by listening to Mozart.*

ACTIVITIES: *All this is beginning to get really complicated. All the more reason to work with others so that you can reassure yourselves that you are running the tests right. Having said that, try writing and testing some of your own.*

18. ADVERBS

Adverbs and adverbial phrases have two main roles[2].

Their first main role is to qualify or *modify* the action of the sentence as expressed in the verb. Thus they will most commonly refer to the place, time, manner of, or reason or purpose for the action or state described by the verb, answering the questions *where*, *when*, *how* and *why*.

I wrote the novel ***at home***. (Place)
I wrote the novel ***yesterday***. (Time)
I wrote the novel ***badly***. (Manner)
I wrote the novel ***for posterity.*** (Reason)
Badly and *yesterday* are both adverbs, and *at home* and *for posterity* are adverbial phrases.

You can have more than one adverb or adverbial phrase in the same sentence and, though they traditionally appear at the end of the sentence, they do have much more freedom of position than do other parts of speech. Here are two adverbs, *yesterday,* and *slowly*, and an adverbial phrase, *in her study,* all in the same sentence and comparatively free to change position:
The writer was working ***slowly in her study yesterday.***
Yesterday *the writer was* ***slowly*** *working* ***in her study***.

The second main role of an adverb is to *pre-modify* other parts of speech, most commonly adjectives and other adverbs:
I am a ***very*** *cheerful person.* (Adverb pre-modifies adjective)
I am working ***extremely*** *slowly*. (Adverb pre-modifies another adverb)

Adverbs are very often identified by their *ly* endings and are often formed by adding *ly* to an adjective: *slow* : *slowly*. Needless to say many of the commonest do not have *ly*.

ACTIVITIES: *Adverbs are the most diversely occurring of all the parts of speech, and have many different shades of function. If you discover you are stuck you may want to look at a more thorough account than this one. Try some of your own anyway. You will probably discover some adverbs that don't quite fit with the limited number of functions I*

have outlined, but still be pretty sure they are adverbs, in which case you will probably be right.

19. SENTENCES: SUBJECTS & PREDICATES

We have now covered all the main defining elements of the sentence: the subject, verb, object, complement, and adverbial elements, and picked up some other parts of speech on the way such as nouns and adjectives. So we can now return to the old subject/predicate division of the sentence. We defined the subject as being what the sentence is about, and that definition still holds. The rest of the sentence is the predicate. In each of the following examples the subject remains the same, *Charlie*, and the rest of the sentence in bold italic is the predicate.

The predicate can contain just a verb:

Charlie ***lies.***

or it can contain a verb and an object:

Charlie ***wrote a novel.***

or it can contain a verb and a complement:

Charlie ***is an idiot.***

or it can contain a verb, a direct object, an indirect object, and an adverbial phrase:

Charlie ***gave the indifferent novel to his friend in the evening.***

In other words the predicate can contain just about as much as you want to put in it. The only thing that is compulsory is the verb.

ACTIVITIES: *Now you have got this far, subjects and predicates should be pretty straightforward, but if you feel the need to practice, then carry on.*

20. NOUNS ELSEWHERE IN THE SENTENCE

So far we have defined nouns in terms of their role as the subject of the sentence. However it will have rapidly become very clear to you that nouns can occur elsewhere in the sentence, and indeed in some of the examples we have already looked at we have found nouns elsewhere.

In fact nouns, and by implication noun phrases, can occur as the subject, as the object - both direct and indirect, as the complement, and, in passive sentences, as the agent of the sentence.

In addition nouns will be found within phrases that have adverbial and adjectival functions within the sentence:

I give ***a sweet to my friend***.

A sweet is a noun phrase acting as a direct object; *to my friend* is a noun phrase acting as an indirect object.

More examples:

When I grew up I became ***a man***.

a man is a noun phrase acting as a complement.

I always eat cereal in the ***morning***.

morning is a noun within the adverbial phrase *in the morning*, telling us when the action of the sentence takes place.

ACTIVITIES: *Like I said, you will have discovered this already, so I suspect it will be a case of going back to your previous examples and seeing how it all fits.*

21. PRONOUNS ELSEWHERE IN THE SENTENCE

What applies to nouns in the previous section also applies to pronouns. They too can be object or complement, in which case they change their form. Thus *I* becomes *me*, *he* becomes *him, she* becomes *her*, *we* becomes *us,* and *they* becomes *them*. Here they are some examples:

She *followed James.* (Pronoun as subject)

but

James followed ***her***. (Pronoun as direct object)

They *gave the ball to the referee.* (Pronoun as subject)

but

The referee gave the ball ***to them***. (Pronoun as indirect object)

The person who did it was ***me.*** (Pronoun as complement)

Examples of pronouns as complements are frequently found in answers to questions:

Who took the car? It wasn't ***me****, it was* ***him***. (Pronouns as complements)

And, as you will know, in usage, the alternative form of the pronoun can be found elsewhere too:

Me *and my friend went to the park* being fairly interchangeable with *My friend and* ***I*** *went to the park.*

(I am well aware that sticklers for style will be jumping up and down in the margins at this point, demanding that when pronouns appear as complements they should not change their form. We should say *It was I,* not *It was me*. And as for *Me and him went to the park,* those same sticklers for style will probably be becoming apoplectic. But alas usage is against them, and a descriptive grammar is one that describes language as it is used, not language as it should be used.)

ACTIVITIES: *Once again I suspect that this section has not told you anything that you hadn't already realised for yourselves. You can always try a few just to make sure.*

22. ADJECTIVES ELSEWHERE IN THE SENTENCE

Simplest of all, now that you know what a complement is, you will probably now know that an adjective can appear as a complement:

*The ball was **red**.*

ACTIVITIES: *Go back to the complement section, check it out, and try a couple just to make sure.*

23. PAUSE TO TAKE STOCK

At the beginning of this handbook I suggested that parts of speech were defined not by their meanings, but in terms of their role within the sentence. Thus we have had to look fairly extensively at the construction of the sentence itself in order to identify how nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs function within it.

We have now covered the main ground, but there is still quite a bit to do, particularly if we want to be in a position to answer most of the questions an intelligent young learner might ask. Firstly we will look at prepositions, the function words that relate the various parts of speech to each other within the sentence.

There is a bit more to say about verbs, looking particularly at auxiliary verbs, and then briefly at transitive and intransitive verbs and at the active and the passive.

Then we will look at how we join sentences together, introducing the idea of clauses and how they operate, and at conjunctions, the function words which relate clauses grammatically to one another.

Finally, I shall look at how questions, exclamations and commands differ from the statement sentences that we have been considering so far.

First of all prepositions...

24. PREPOSITIONS

There are a number of function words that occur in a sentence that relate phrases to each other in the sentence, and these are known as prepositions. They include words like *to, by, with, from, at, in, on, behind, over*, and groups of words like *in front of, due to, in spite of* and so on. They are effectively the grammatical glue which holds the sentence together and they make clear the relationship of one part of the sentence to another:

*I went **to** the house **with** my friend.*
*We went swimming **despite** the cold.*
*Smoking is permitted **behind** the bike sheds.*
If you are still not convinced, then consider the following more detailed example:
Let us suppose we have the words:
the statuette
Mary
the big room
Jeremy
gave
dinner,
We can play around with the word order but that still won't give us a sentence:
**Mary gave the statuette the big room Jeremy dinner.*
We need the glue of prepositions *in, to* and *after* to make it clear how the parts of the sentence relate to each other grammatically in order to make sense:
*Mary gave the statuette **in** the big room **to** Jeremy **after** dinner.*
We can now see that:
Mary is the subject;
the statuette is the direct object;
in the big room is an adjectival phrase describing the object;
to Jeremy is the indirect object;
and *after dinner* is an adverbial phrase telling us when the action of the sentence took place.
Change the word order and use a different set of prepositions, *to, in* and *with*, and we have a different sentence with a different grammar and a different meaning.
*Mary gave dinner **to** Jeremy **in** the big room **with** the statuette.*
I will leave it to you to work out the different elements of that sentence as one of your activities in this section.

And while we're here, remember that the same word can have a number of different functions. The word *to* has a myriad of functions, and is not a preposition in say:
*I want **to** go away.*
Here it is a function word which is part of the verb phrase.
Prepositions relate phrases to each other within the sentence, and are to be distinguished from conjunctions which relate clauses within the sentence. Don't worry, we will get to those at 28.

ACTIVITIES: *Well my examples were pretty complicated, but I don't think you should have too much trouble with these if once again you try some of your own.*

25. MORE ABOUT VERBS: AUXILIARY VERBS

Now three sections on verbs starting with auxiliary verbs. At its simplest, the verbal part of the sentence, the verb phrase, will contain just one word:

Mary ***writes***.

The verb here is *writes*. However the verb phrase will often contain more than one word:

Mary ***will write***.

Mary ***would have written.***

Now we have a main verb, which conveys the bulk of the meaning: *write* or *written*. Then there are the auxiliary verbs, *will* and *would have*, which in various ways refine the meaning of the main verb, generally indicating a change of tense to indicate that the action took place in the past or in the future or in some hypothetical time. As you can see you can have more than one auxiliary verb in a verb phrase. Commonly occurring auxiliary verbs are: *is, are, was, were, has, have, had, do, can, could, will, would, might*. Notice that the main verb often changes its form to become what is sometimes referred to as a participle: *write* to *written* or *writing* for example:

Mary ***has*** *writt****en*** *an article.*

Mary ***is*** *writ****ing*** *an article.*

ACTIVITIES: *Try some of your own, seeing if you can sort out the main from the auxiliary verbs.*

26. MORE ABOUT VERBS: TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE

This need not detain us long. Simply put, some verbs need an object, and these are known as transitive verbs. Other verbs can be used without an object, and these are known as intransitive verbs. Whether a verb is transitive or intransitive thus clearly makes a difference to the other elements we will find in a sentence.

The plant ***died***. (Intransitive verb - no object needed)

But:

Simon ***likes*** *chocolate.*

likes is a transitive verb, and must have an object. We can't say:

Simon* ***likes*.

Some verbs can be either transitive or intransitive in different circumstances, *eat* for example:
*Simon **is eating** chocolate.* (Transitive)
*Simon **is eating**.* (Intransitive)

ACTIVITIES: *Try some of your own.*

27.. MORE ABOUT VERBS: ACTIVE & PASSIVE

Take a sentence like:
Pam drove the bus.
The subject is *Pam,* and the sentence tells you what the subject did. Such sentences are said to be in the active voice, or simply active, and the verb, *drove*, is said to be an active verb. By contrast take a sentence like:
Pam was hit by the tram.
In that example the sentence tells us that something was done to the subject. Such sentences are said to be in the passive voice, or more simply, passive, this time with a passive verb phrase, *was hit*. Passive and active sentences can be formed from each other by a process of transposition:
Pam threw the book.
The book was thrown by Pam.
The meaning stays the same, but the subject of the active sentence, *Pam,* moves to the end of the passive sentence, and is preceded by the preposition *by* to become the agent. Similarly, the object of the active sentence, *book*, moves to the front of the sentence to become the subject.

{Much academic writing is written in the passive voice with the aim of giving it a, doubtless spurious, sense of objectivity and authority. It is easier to understand active sentences. Passive sentences, particularly long and convoluted ones, like this one, have to be worked at, and are, by contrast, found by many readers, particularly children, to be more difficult to comprehend.}

ACTIVITIES: *Have a go at doing some of your own. Make up some active sentences, and see if you can transpose them into passive ones, and vice versa.*

28. CLAUSES

You will by now have discovered that you can write pretty complicated multiple sentences, and so far we haven't really considered them. In the next five sections I shall be discussing clause analysis, and how far you want to go with this is really up to you. The sections are interlinked and in the first instance you will generate examples which you can't fully explain, though by the time you get to the end of the five sections you should be able to sort out most of the problems. Take the two sentences:

Henry wrote a novel.

The novel sold well.

We can combine them in a number of ways:

The novel that Henry wrote, sold well.

Henry wrote a novel that sold well.

The novel which was written by Henry sold well.

When we put two or more sentences together like this to make one larger sentence, the constituent parts are known as clauses. Clauses have the same grammatical rules as sentences. They can have within them subjects, verbs, objects, complements and adverbial elements and, as with sentences, the verb is compulsory. Indeed, for some linguists, the grammar that you have been working on in this handbook is technically speaking the grammar of the clause. So to go back to the first example:

The novel ***that Henry wrote*** *sold well.*

I have highlighted the clause *that Henry wrote* within the sentence. We can break it down as follows:

Henry (Subject)

wrote (Verb)

that (Object)

You will already note that we have a rather different construction involving the little word *that*, which is a relative pronoun (see below at 32), standing in for the word *novel*, which is the object of the clause and which occurs in a rather unexpected place for an object. All of this will become clearer as we proceed.

ACTIVITIES: *Have a go at combining sentences to make one complete sentence and see if you can identify the clauses with their constituent parts. For a while there will still be words whose function is puzzling, but we will get to those.*

29. MORE ABOUT CLAUSES: COMPLEX SENTENCES:

In lots of cases clauses themselves function like the parts of speech we've already looked at: hence noun clauses, adjectival clauses and adverbial clauses. In sentences where there is a clause acting as such a part of speech, the main part of the sentence is known as the main clause, and the embedded clause is known as the subordinate clause, and such sentences are known as complex sentences. Here's an example:

*The bus, **which was late,** was full **when it arrived**.*

In the first instance we can think of that sentence as being made up of a combination of three sentences:

The bus was full.

The bus was late.

The bus arrived.

When we add these three sentences to make a single complex sentence we have to transform them somewhat. Words have to be omitted and the function words *which* and *when* have to be added:

The bus, which was late, was full when it arrived.

Once we have that sentence we can break it down as follows:

The bus was full (Main clause)

which was late (Subordinate adjectival clause modifying the noun *bus.*)

when it arrived (Subordinate adverbial clause telling you about the time or state described in the main clause)

ACTIVITIES: *Go back to the examples you generated in 26 and see if you can decide whether you have complex sentences with main and subordinate clauses and, if you have, see if you can decide on the function of these subordinate clauses in the sentence – are they acting as noun clauses, or adjectival clauses, or adverbial clauses? If you think you haven't got a main clause / subordinate clause construction you may well have a compound sentence, and I talk about them next.*

30. MORE ABOUT CLAUSES: COMPOUND SENTENCES

As well as the main clause / subordinate clauses construction of complex sentences, there are also sentences containing clauses which function as two (or more) equally important parts of the sentence, classically joined by conjunctions *and, or,* or *but*. Such sentences are known as compound sentences.

The writer wrote high class literature but her husband bought his clothes at the Oxfam Shop

It is much easier to break such compound sentences into their originating separate sentences – here:

The writer wrote high class literature.

The writer's husband bought his clothes at the Oxfam shop.

Even here, when the two sentences are combined, words will be omitted and replaced with other words which, amongst other things, function to link the two halves together: in this case *her* replacing *The writer's*.

ACTIVITIES: *Go back to your previous examples, or make up some more, and see if you can distinguish compound from complex sentences.*

31. MORE ABOUT CLAUSES: CONJUNCTIONS

As you have been constructing your compound and complex sentences you will have discovered that you have used a whole set of words or groups of words like *and* or *if* or *while* or *because,* or *in order to*, to join the clauses together. These function words are known as conjunctions and their function is to indicate the relationship of the clauses to each other. As I have already suggested the conjunctions *and, or*, or *but* link the two equal clauses in a compound sentence:

*The factory was closed **and** the workers had gone home.*

With subordinate clauses in a complex sentence you have much more choice of conjunction:

*The lights went out **when** the fuse blew.*

*The car stopped **because** it had run out of petrol.*

***If** you don't look where you are going you will bump into lampposts.*

*It was still very warm **although** it was raining.*

ACTIVITIES: *You should be getting close to the point where you can identify all the words you have used in your construction of complex and compound sentences. So again go back to the examples you have already produced and see if you can identify the conjunctions.*

32. MORE ABOUT CLAUSES: RELATIVE PRONOUNS

There is one further group of words that relate subordinate clauses to the main clause, and these are relative pronouns. These are the *wh* words like *who*, *whom*, *which*, and the word *that*. They function very much like conjunctions, but they have the added function that they act as pronouns too, standing in for a noun or noun phrase we have already come across:

*The giant, **who** had eaten several sheep for lunch, was ready for an afternoon nap.*

The relative pronoun *who* refers to the noun phrase *The giant* and introduces the subordinate clause – sometimes referred to as the relative clause – *who had eaten several sheep for lunch*.

To take another example:

The spy listened to the tape ***which*** *she found in the drawer.*

The relative pronoun *which* refers to the noun phrase *the tape*, and introduces the subordinate clause: *which she found in the drawer*.

It is important to note that words which can function as relative pronouns can function as other parts of speech too. The word *that* for example has a whole range of usages.

ACTIVITIES: *We have now covered the bulk of what you need to know about how clauses work and the function words that are used to link clauses together in sentences. Specifically, so far as this section is concerned, you can have a go at constructing sentences which have subordinate clauses using relative pronouns.*

33. CLAUSES AND PHRASES

Clauses are distinguished from phrases in that clauses are essentially embedded sentences, with their own verb. Phrases are not embedded sentences, and do not have to have the defining elements of sentence grammar.

Take this sentence:

The tall thin man *consumed* ***a huge six course meal*** *without so much as a belch.*

We have two noun phrases **–** *the tall thin man* and *a huge six course meal.*

I can rewrite the sentence with a couple of subordinate clauses, keeping much the same meaning, though with some change of emphasis:

The man, ***who was tall and thin****, consumed, without so much as a belch, a huge meal* ***which consisted of six courses***.

The verbs *was* and *consisted* indicate the presence of two subordinate clauses: *who was tall and thin* and *which consisted of six courses*. {In each case the clauses are acting as adjectives, describing *man* and *meal* respectively, and are hence adjectival clauses.}

ACTIVITIES: *Compose some sentences with phrases in. See if you can transform the sentences so that those phrases become clauses, and vice versa. Make sure you can tell the difference.*

34. BACK TO DIFFERENT SENTENCE TYPES

Right at the beginning I suggested that there were there are four different basic sentence types,
statements (declarative sentences)
questions (interrogative sentences)
commands (imperative sentences)
exclamations (exclamatory sentences)
I wrote a novel.
Did I write a novel?
Write a novel!
How well I wrote it!

We have so far considered only statements (declarative sentences), and I don't want to spend too much time on the differences, which are in any case fairly obvious. The examples quoted make things fairly clear anyway. Word order, and the use of the verb are key features.

Commands (imperatives) and other directives are characterised by the use of the verb in its simplest form, and by the absence of a subject:
***Pass** the butter please.*
Help!
***Come** to supper.*

Exclamations (exclamatory sentences) usually involve the use of *how* or *what*, and can be abbreviated to the extent that they do not have to have a verb at all:
***How** nice of you to let me come.* (Verb: *let*)
***What** a nice day!* (No verb)

Questions (interrogatives) typically involve the reversal of the usual subject verb order. In many questions the subject appears between the auxiliary and the main verb:
***The Mexican is reading** a book.* (Statement)
***Is the Mexican reading** a book?* (Question)

Questions are also formed using *wh* words: *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, *what*, *why*, *when*, *where*, and *how* - not strictly speaking a *wh* word, but included here since it behaves in the same way.
***Who** were you with last night?*
***Where** are you going tonight?*
***Which** cake are you going to eat?*

Technically these have a range of functions, all of which can be thought of as within the general category of having an interrogative function. So the word *who* in the above example is sometimes thought of as an interrogative pronoun, standing in for a noun that has yet to appear:

Who *were you with last night? I was with* ***Henry****.*

So far as the other two examples are concerned, *Where* has an adverbial role within its interrogative role, and *Which* is operating as a determiner.

As we have discovered all these *wh* words occur elsewhere in the sentence, in which case they have other functions, and are thus defined in other ways. They are a good example to finish with since they demonstrate once again that parts of speech are defined purely in terms of the function that the word has in the sentence.

ACTIVITIES: *Try some of your own, starting with statement sentences and transforming them into questions, or commands, or exclamations.*

35. THAT'S AS FAR AS I GO

That's as far as I go. If you want more, then go to a standard text book or reference book. This handbook was designed as an introduction to the basics, and I have tried to keep the frills down to a minimum.

In the meantime...

ACTIVITIES: *Make a cup of tea, put your feet up, and read a good book!*

Notes

[1] If you read more advanced accounts of grammar than this one, you will discover that, technically, the term phrase is applied to single nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, but we don't need to worry about that for our purposes.

[2] The classification of adverbs is a good deal more detailed than I have indicated here and I have stuck to the more traditional terms: time, place, manner, and reason or purpose. The roles of adverbs are more varied too. If you want to know more, follow up the references in the bibliography, particularly Crystal 1988

§§

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

General

Crystal, David (1988) ***Rediscover Grammar*** **Harlow. Longman**

Crystal, David (1995) ***The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of The English Language.*** **Cambridge. Cambridge University Press**

Both of these are useful reference books. *Rediscover Grammar* in particular is a handy sized pocket book offering definitions and examples under 76 different headings. I have drawn on *Rediscover Grammar* a great deal, and it is also the source of some of the examples I have discussed. As with the Perera book (see below), but in a different way, it will offer the interested reader further definitions and distinctions.

The *Encyclopaedia* is a much more hefty but very readable tome with sections on every aspect of language, including grammar.

Hudson, Richard (1998) ***English Grammar*** **London. Routledge**

A very user friendly basic textbook, aimed very much at the beginning student of language, rather than at the education student or at the teacher as such. In particular he introduces the practice of sentence diagramming – drawing lines of relationship between the words of a sentence and labelling each word: N V A etc. I have deliberately refrained from doing that myself, but it is an obvious next step for those of you who would want to take the study of grammar further. Indeed Hudson's book would be an excellent follow up to the e-book you have been working on for the reader who was interested in the further study of grammar as a subject area in its own right.

Perera, Katherine (1984) ***Children's Writing and Reading: Analysing Classroom Language*** **Oxford: Basil Blackwell**

Clearly aimed at teachers, and Chapter 2 is the author's view of 'what every teacher should know about grammar' and I have drawn on it considerably in writing this handbook. She is both more detailed than I have been, and more comprehensive, and will help you out when you come across those words whose function is very difficult to analyse in anything remotely resembling traditional terms.

Government Publications (UK)

(This section of the bibliography is devoted to a couple of UK Government publications, clearly specifically relevant to UK teachers, but which may be of wider interest.)

Department for Education & Skills (DFES) 2012 ***The National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching 3rd Edition*** **London. Department for Education & Skills**

One of the so called innovations of the UK National Literacy Strategy (NLS) was a return to the pedagogy of direct instruction, something that had been largely absent in UK primary schools

since the 1960s. Another so called innovation was a return to an explicit emphasis on grammar teaching. The teaching of grammar constitutes a very substantial proportion of the sentence level strand of the Strategy. The NLS offers no rationale for that emphasis. The QCA Grammar Papers that I review below suggest that the benefits of direct grammar teaching are unproven, even though they go on to recommend it, but the most explicit justification that I have come across occurred in the now replaced 1998 DFEE *Circular No. 4/98*.[1] That circular argued for the explicit teaching of grammatical terms:

> 'As part of all courses trainees must be taught: how to teach writing so that pupils write confidently, accurately, fluently and with understanding, including how to: *teach grammar systematically, through: direct instruction on grammatical rules and conventions;*'
> (pp. 38/39 my emphasis)

And:

> 'As part of all courses, trainees must demonstrate that they know and understand: the grammar of spoken and written English, including: the grammatical function of words/phrases in clauses and sentences e.g.. *subject, conjunctions, verbs, nouns, adverbs, predicates etc.;*'
> (p.45, their italics)

That explicitness has disappeared from more recent requirements, but paradoxically the contentious assumption that direct instruction of grammatical terms will be beneficial is thereby now simply assumed to be the case, and is thereby all the stronger. But pupils had been writing confidently, accurately, fluently, and with understanding, without any direct instruction in the rules of grammar, for the best part of thirty five years. Indeed such evidence as there is suggests that direct instruction can all too often dent children's confidence, fluency, and even accuracy rather than boosting it. That is not to say that intelligent and creative approaches to teaching children about words and how they work are not a good idea in and of themselves. I most certainly think they are. And indeed I think my own approach in this handbook could be usefully adapted to the classroom, though again I would strongly recommend that teachers make it creative and fun, otherwise all that will happen is that you will put the children off for life. Whatever else, it is certainly clear that UK teachers now need to have a good grasp of the basic technical terms and functions of grammar, all of which very much provides one *raison d'être* for this handbook.

(To be fair to the document, Part 3 does have a good glossary of terms, loath as I am to say anything positive about such a totalitarian, dictatorial, coercive and prescriptive publication!)

[1] DfEE (1998) *Teaching: High Status, High Standards. Requirements for Courses of Initial Teacher Training Circular No. 4/98* London. Department for Education & Employment.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (1998) ***The Grammar Papers. Perspectives on the Teaching of Grammar in the National Curriculum*** **Middlesex QCA Publications**

A collection of six papers from unnamed writers, first published over 20 years ago but still very much available on-line. The first is a useful historical overview. In the 1950s traditional grammar teaching in schools came under increasing attack in school, and by the 1970s any systematic teaching of grammar had died out altogether. If grammatical terms were used at all they were used in the context of children's work. In the meantime we have seen the emergence of new grammars, specifically the emergence of transformational-generative grammar from Chomsky, and of systemic-functional grammar from Halliday. Chomsky was interested in how grammars are learned and applied, and in giving an account of those features of grammar which seemed to be universal. Halliday was interested in developing a systematic account of how people actually used language for making meaning and communicating in their everyday social interaction.

The second paper discusses the role of grammar in the order for English in the National Curriculum. From our point of view it is a useful paper in that it places grammar within a wider perspective of knowledge about language. The writer of the paper argues for the benefits of pupils' explicit knowledge about how language works. Among the more controversial claims, offered without reference to any published evidence, are claims that pupils with explicit grammatical knowledge

> ‘are likely to be more responsive and critical as listeners and readers.’ (p.21)

and that such explicit grammatical knowledge will enable pupils:

> ‘to recognise and understand the particular linguistic demands of different kinds of texts and contexts'; and that such knowledge 'can help students use the language of the subject area appropriately, for example when describing events, reporting a process, or explaining what they have learned.’ (p.21)

Otherwise, given the emphasis in the order on explicit knowledge about language and language use as a subject area in its own right, grammar clearly has a part to play.

The third paper is a report on a survey conducted by SCAA of teacher attitudes to grammar and to wider aspects of knowledge about language. Specifically, for our purposes, the findings showed that there were gaps in teachers' knowledge, and widespread uncertainty about the best way to go about teaching grammar explicitly. It is, among other things, the gap in teachers' knowledge that this handbook is designed to address.

The fourth paper is written in that form of anonymous imperative mode that is now so familiar, full of injunctions that 'teachers should', and 'teachers need to', and laying down the law about everything from the obvious - 'schools and departments will need to decide their priorities'(36) - to the even more obvious - 'Effective grammar teaching will refer to previous grammar teaching'(37) It is clear from the paper that QCA is expecting teachers to draw pupils' attention to language use in considerable detail. The paper is a far cry from the other more discursive papers, and assumes that the sort of detailed attention that is being recommended will be beneficial, yet nowhere in the whole document is any research evidence offered to substantiate such an assumption.

The fifth paper discusses the need to assess pupils' grammar. In the examples they give there is an emphasis on the pupils' production of language in meaningful situations.

The sixth paper is a review of the research evidence. Much of the research done in the 1940s and 1950s concentrated on the effect of grammar teaching on children's writing, and concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that there was any pay off. The sort of grammar teaching that was going on then was decontextualised clause analysis, and exercises designed to enhance recognition of parts of speech. So far as more up to date research is concerned very little has been done, and what there is is patchy. After a review of all the available research, the writers of the paper suggests that 'Few answers emerge from this research that are directly relevant to the current situation.'(55) They emphasise that old fashioned decontextualised grammar exercises of the 'underline the noun' variety will not work, but they do suggest that:

> '..there is evidence that drawing explicit attention to the syntactic features of pupils' writing, in the context of an individual pupil's work and in relation to the type of task in hand, can increase pupils' awareness of how language works. This *may* in turn increase their sense of control over their own writing.
> (p.55 my emphasis)

This useful review of the research confirms that there is no evidence of a direct link between teaching grammar and the improvement of children's writing. The argument is being made, however, that wider knowledge about language is both an important aspect of the English curriculum in its own right, and that drawing explicit attention to language use in the right sorts of ways and in the right sorts of contexts may well be more generally beneficial to pupils' use of language. It is within this context that the naming of grammatical parts has its particular place.