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DEVELOPING A SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND TESTING TOOL OF NOUNS IN ENGLISH FOR STUDENTS OF ESL: A GRAMMATICAL APPROACH



M.Somathasan¹ and R.Saranya²

INTRODUCTION

Speech is a feature of a man's daily life. It is a boon for him. This speech has some parts or elements. To make the speech perfect and meaningful, the parts of it should be developed by the people especially by the students of ESL as they are in the competitive world of English Language. Further, students need to recognize the parts of speech in the context of sentences. That's because many words function in more than one role. Only by analyzing the sentence at hand can students see how a given word functions. The study of the parts of speech is also known as the grammatical study. What is Grammar? 'Grammar is the science of letter; hence the science of using words correctly' – Abbott. Grammar in common is the system of rules in our heads. But it is important to recognize that these internalized rules, like

ABSTRACT

Grammar is a very old field of study. It is Plato, the famed philosopher from ancient Greece, who first divided the sentence into subject and verb. It happened about 2,400 years ago! Ever since then, students all over the world have found it worthwhile to study the structure of words and sentences. Why? Because skill in speaking and writing is the hallmark of all educated people. The study of the structure of words and sentences depends on the language ability of a student, which is seen as a factor affecting achievement not only in schools and universities, but in all subject areas as well. Thus, language study is as a vital aspect of students' experiences along with their pedagogical process. It is obvious that English language is now-a-days a famous lingua franca. Its usage for a student of ESL is inevitable at this current language trend. If a student of ESL likes to master or compete with English language, he has to, first of all, equip with the thorough knowledge of the building blocks of English language known as the parts of speech which are noun, pronoun, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. This paper attempts to study the part of speech, noun, and its kinds and functions deeply. Nouns have the central importance in a sentence. For example, if a boy comes home from school and says his father, 'I hit'; the verb alone means nothing. Nouns breath life and meaning into the sentence. 'I hit my friend' or 'I hit a home run and won the game' fill out the sentence with precise meanings, with both making for lively conversation. Thus, nouns are very important. Based on this idea, an effective user-friendly computational tool, Noun Learner and Tester (NLT), is developed for the good side of the school and university students of ESL in India and Sri Lanka.

KEYWORDS : grammar, structure, hallmark, pedagogical process, lingua franca, building blocks, parts of speech, nouns, user-friendly, computational tool,

Short Profile

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singular words ending in -x in box, -ch in church, etc. have their plurals by adding -es to their ends as in boxes and churches, vary from one language to another. Thus, it is essential for students learning English as a Second Language (ESL) to develop their knowledge in parts of speech of English for their educational success. The earlier philosophers and scholars like Aristotle and Stoics had their own lists of parts of speech, but it was the scholar, Dionysius Thrax who included the parts of speech into eight traditional categories which are noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. These elements of speech are also known as POS, word classes, morphological classes, and even morphological tags in modern English and the field of Linguistics. Further, these are divided into

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two groups as Open class words and Closed class words. Open class words consist of noun, verb, adjective, and adverb whereas the closed class words include the rest. The knowledge of the open class words is very important to bring and sustain the meaning of any phrases or sentences in spoken or written phenomena. For instance, the meaningful sentence, 'I went to the hotel to book two rooms for my father and his friend', will have no meaning with the function words only, like 'I to theto for my and his'. It is, without doubt, fully absurd. Thus, learning about the open class words is the basis to put up a strong foundation for the development of English language. In this article, the word class, noun, has been taken into consideration and its types and functions are profoundly analyzed for the benefit of the student society learning English as an SL. Statistically speaking, in any sample of English spoken utterance or written text, one of the 10 most common words is the. What does this suggest? Yes! Lots of nouns - because the just about always occurs with a noun.

NOUNS:

Nouns are important words in any language, and in English, too. They are complex and often a puzzle for the students of ESL. It is known that learning to use the articles a/an and the with the right noun types for the right meanings is difficult for many students. And, the is one of the most common words, so the challenge meets the students at every turn. Noun is the Latin word for 'name'. Thus, based on meaning a noun mainly refers to a person, place, or thing (or animal); and additionally names qualities, feelings, concepts, activities, and measures. For instance:

PERSONS: Mahathma Ghandhi is known throughout the world for non-violence.
Dr. Abdul Kalam is a great source of inspiration to students and youths in India.

Places: Sri Jayawardanapura is the capital of Sri Lanka.
Chidamparam in Tamilnadu is world-wide famous for Nadarajar Temple.

Things: A cow is a useful domestic animal.
Water in clay pot is cool forever.

Qualities: I admire her sea-sized patience.
Honesty is the best policy.

Feelings: Siva's mother was so happy when the judges praised him.
The Tamil music world is sad about the loss of M.S.Visvanathan

Concepts: God has no religion.
Racism should be avoided at any circumstances.

Activities: Singing refreshes our mind.
Writing is an art.

Measures: Day, week, centimetre, and kilogram are some measurements.
Football is often a game of inches.

Nouns are of different kinds. They can be grouped into a small number of classes which differ in meaning and grammatical behaviour. The kinds of nouns are proper, common, abstract, concrete, collective, countable, and uncountable nouns.

Proper nouns:

The word, proper, is from a Latin word meaning limited or belonging to one. Thus, a proper noun is the name of a specific person, place, or thing. It always begins with a capital letter.

e.g.

- Sigiriya in Sri Lanka is the historical place of the Tamil king, Kasiyappan.
- The Pamban Bridge in Tamil Nadu is the second longest railway bridge (2.06 km) in India after Vembanad Bridge (4 km) in Kochi, Kerala.

Proper nouns have no contrast for number or definiteness: they are singular and definite. For example, the proper noun Smith has no options a Smith, the Smith, or Smiths. Further, Proper nouns are generally used in situations where the speaker and listener know which individual is meant, without further information.

COMMON NOUNS:

The word, common, is from a Latin word which means general or possessed by all. For instance, wagon is a term that names any vehicle of a

certain kind used for hauling. Common nouns like Google, Eiffel Tower, etc. can be either countable or uncountable. Countable common nouns refer to entities which can be counted: they have both a singular and plural form like a rabbit, two rabbits, etc. Both in the singular and the plural there is a difference between indefinite and definite signaled by articles: a rabbit vs. the rabbit; rabbits vs. the rabbits. Uncountable common nouns refer to something which cannot be counted: they do not vary for number. They cannot occur with the indefinite article a or an, but they allow a contrast between definite and indefinite articles like the milk vs. milk. The difference between countable and uncountable common nouns is represented below:

common countable		common uncountable		
	indefinite	definite	indefinite	definite
singular	<i>a rabbit</i>	<i>the rabbit</i>	<i>milk</i>	<i>the milk</i>
plural	<i>rabbits</i>	<i>the rabbits</i>	---	---

ABSTRACT NOUNS:

Abstract nouns refer to abstractions such as concepts, ideas, philosophies, events, states, times, qualities, and other entities like action that cannot be concretely perceived. Abstract nouns such as success, happiness, idea, depression, love, hate, anger, power, tolerance, importance, freedom, courage, punishment, forgiveness, etc. cannot be touched, seen, tasted, smelled, and heard; and they are not made of materials, but play an important role in life, i.e. they are the useful means of building ideas, help writers extend their arguments, and develop theories by encapsulating remarkable insights in them.

e.g.

- Christina had a lot of success last year.
- Love is kind and gentle.
- The desire for power has ruined many good people.

Concrete nouns:

Concrete nouns like student, bus, grease, hair, etc. name something recognizable through the senses, i.e. referring to physical entities or phenomena. Further explained, the things we interact with every day, can be touched, seen, tasted, felt, and heard. They are the things in their material forms. Concrete nouns are the opposite of abstract nouns. For instance:

- Mahesh parked the car in the shed.
- The spanner fell on my foot.

Concrete nouns also have the countable and uncountable distinction. Countable concrete nouns refer to persons, objects, or places like teacher, table, and town. Uncountable concrete nouns refer to substances, materials, liquids, or gases like water, silver, and air.

Collective nouns:

A collective noun is a singular noun which designates a group of people, animals, or things. For example: audience, army, bunch, class, committee, crowd, family, gang, group, herd, jury, party, staff, and team. Nouns like group, crowd, and flock are called 'of-collectives' because they generally precede of + plural noun, where the plural noun names a set of people, animals, objects, etc. All the collective nouns behave like ordinary countable nouns, varying for number and definiteness: the team, a team, the teams, and teams. It is possible for singular collective nouns to be followed either by a singular or plural verb form. For instance:

- My family was delighted with their hospitality.
- My family were delighted with their hospitality.

Here, the first option is normal in American English. In British English both options are found.

Collective nouns almost go with the particular collocations. For example:

Collective noun Collocations

- Bunch of keys, grapes, roses, idiots
- Crowd of people, fans
- Flock of sheep, birds, children
- Group of people, thugs, animals
- Pride of lions
- Set of instructions, rules

Countable and uncountable nouns:

It's important to distinguish between countable and uncountable nouns in English because their usage is different in regards to both determiners and verbs.

COUNTABLE NOUNS:

A countable noun also known as count noun has both a singular and plural form, for example word ~ words, picture ~ pictures, bridge ~ bridges, etc. The singular form of count nouns can use the indefinite article a or an like in 'I bought a shirt' or 'I peeled an orange'. Count nouns can also be preceded by the words like many, few, these or the cardinal numbers 2, 3, 4, ... as in examples, 'I have got many books', 'These children are naughty', 'My son-in-law has three cars'. If a student wants to ask about the quantity of a countable noun, he can ask How many? combined with the plural countable noun.

e.g.

- She has three dogs.
- I own a farm-house.
- I would like to buy two books, please.
- How many friends do you have?

It is to be pondered that the words like sheep and deer, which are unchanged in the plural, i.e. which do not have the corresponding plurals, are considered as countable nouns, for they combine with such counting words as in many deer or three deer or these deer.

UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS:

Uncountable nouns (contrasting with count nouns) also known as non-count or mass nouns, usually do not have a plural form; and they are used with a singular verb. Non-count nouns do not combine with the counting words said above like many, these, three, etc.; for example water, blood, gold, money, furniture, information, advice. Further, uncountable nouns may be the names for abstract ideas or qualities or for physical objects that are too small or amorphous to be counted like liquids, powders, gases, etc. Some other examples of non-count nouns are tea, sugar, water, air, rice, knowledge, beauty, anger, fear, love, music, happiness, money, research, safety, evidence, etc.

WAYS OF RECOGNIZING A NOUN:

Apart from the types or kinds, a noun can be recognized as a noun by its ending or suffixes, position, and function.

NOUN ENDING OR SUFFIXES:

Certain suffixes are associated with the word class, noun. These suffixes are helpful to identify the nouns in sentences. They are -ity in opportunity and security, -ty in safety and loyalty, -ment in government and environment, -ness in happiness and willingness, -tion in relation and narration, -ation in information and transformation, -ition in addition and composition, -hood in childhood and falsehood, -dom in kingdom and freedom, -age in blockage and drainage, -ade in blockade and stockade, -al in dismissal and removal, -ant in informant and inhabitant, -ee in employee and refugee, -er in dancer and writer, -or in actor and projector, -ar in beggar and liar, -ism in racism and organism, -ist in tourist and artist, -ship in friendship and relationship, -ance in assistance and defiance, -ancy in vacancy and pregnancy, -ure in seizure and failure, -ing in wedding and learning, -th in truth and warmth, and -ence in precedence and existence.

NOUN POSITION IN SENTENCE:

A noun can be recognized by its position in a sentence. The nouns often come after a determiner like a, an, the, this, my, such, etc. For instance:

- The divorce is a relief for her from his torture.

Here, divorce, relief, and torture are clearly nouns as they follow the determiners, The, a, and his respectively.

Nouns usually come after one or more adjectives.

For example:

- Dr. Abdul Kalam apart from the world re-known scientist is such a great noble man.

Functions of nouns in a sentence:

A noun can have many functions in a sentence. Some of the main functions are as follows:

1. Subject of a verb:

ISRO brings glory to India in space research.
(Subject – ISRO, verb – brings)

2. Direct object of a verb:

Students and youths love that genius. (Verb – love, direct object – genius)

3.Object of a preposition:

Sri Lanka is known as the pearl of Indian Ocean.
(Preposition – of, object of preposition– Ocean)

4.Object of a verbal (gerund, infinitive, and participle):

Writing three letters to his girl friend is what he likes to do every day. (Verbal – Writing, object of the verbal – letters)

5.Indirect object of a verb:

The fielder threw the keeper the ball. (Verb – threw, indirect object – keeper)

6.Predicate complement (complement of a copulative verb):

Money is the cause for the envy between the two brothers. (Copulative verb – is, predicate complement – cause)

7.Modifier of another noun:

The peace talks quenched the tension at the border. (Modifying noun – peace, another (modified) noun – talks)

METHODOLOGY:

A lot of noun forms from many sources like books, newspapers, articles, magazines, etc. were collected and sorted out according to the types and concepts of the nouns. Then, the nouns, i.e. as data, were systematically included into the developed tool namely, Noun Learner and Tester (NLT). The tool or computer programme was developed by using the computer language VB 6 in a user-friendly manner and it was successfully tested. It is clear that the students of ESL will find this computational tool, i.e. NLT, as their educational comrade in the development of English language, especially to gain the vocabulary and syntactic working knowledge in the grammatical category, nouns.

Sample visual of the developed tool, Noun Learner and Tester (NLT):



CONCLUSION:

The study of English grammar has two principal advantages. It facilitates mastery of writing and enables students to study the grammar of other languages more efficiently. Thus, it is indispensable for a student of ESL to learn about the parts of speech in English, especially the noun, to develop the language. Shakespeare asked, 'What is in name?', but Shakespeare is also a name, i.e. a proper noun which cannot be ever erased in the world of literature. Therefore, nouns are powerful and learning them helps the students develop the functional vocabulary necessary to discuss and study the English language effectively. Further, the presence of nouns as subjects and objects in a sentence is ineluctable. Thus, nouns play a very important role in English sentence patterns, as well. Therefore, the students of ESL should come to know the nouns and their kinds and functions properly to be successful in spoken and written levels; and the developed tool, Noun Learner and Tester (NLT), rather than the paper-based materials will be very fruitful for them to stimulate the knowledge in nouns to great extent.

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