

**ESSENTIAL  
STRUCTURES:**

**A GUIDE TO ENGLISH  
FOR READERS AND WRITERS**

**Richard E. Mezo**

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There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will--  
--*Hamlet*

Mezo, Richard E.

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## PREFACE

This book was written for Chinese students of English in Taiwan and published by the Crane Publishing Company, Taipei, Taiwan, in 1981. I have enlarged and revised the original and redirected it toward native speakers as well as students of English as a second language. It should properly be used as a supplement in a high school English course or in a developmental college course. The structures herein provide a foundation for more advanced work in English, both reading and writing. Naturally, a book of readings should be provided as well, since reading and writing are indivisible aspects of the language. There are many good anthologies, and the only suggestion I would make is that, in my opinion, students should read description and narration and not exclusively expository writing.

I would again remind students, and not only second language learners, that many books offering vocabulary lists and lists of English idioms and promising to increase a student's "word power" are of extremely limited use. Memorizing words taken from their contexts is a technique that needs to be supplemented by extensive reading of those words in sentences. Just as oral English is best taught by practice, reading and writing in English must also be frequently practiced. There is no good writer who was not first an avid reader.

Structure is the focus of this book--the structure of written forms in English. Often second language teachers assume that native speakers are proficient in language structures; however, such is a misconception. Oral and written language follow different rules and conventions, and even though most native speakers are proficient in speaking, they may be even more deficient in some written structures than non-native speakers. Such is especially true at the more complicated levels of language use. This book is dedicated to those who desire to know such structures.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface .....	iii
Introduction .....	vi
Definitions .....	ix

## PART ONE

### **I. The Parts of Speech**

Nouns, Pronouns, and Substantives .....	3
Verbs .....	10
Adverbs .....	21
Prepositions .....	24
Conjunctions .....	27
Interjections .....	28
Articles .....	29

### **II. Miscellaneous Considerations**

Agreement .....	38
Expletives .....	39
Troublesome Words .....	40
A Note on English Idioms .....	51

### **III. Sentences**

Simple .....	52
Interrogative .....	52
Compound .....	53
Complex .....	54
Cumulative .....	56

### **IV. Additional Punctuation**

Comma .....	58
Semicolon .....	59
Colon .....	59

Dash .....	60
Quotation marks .....	60
Apostrophe .....	61
Hyphen .....	61
Italics .....	61
Parentheses .....	62
Virgule .....	62

## PART TWO

V. Sentence Expansion by Modification .....	64
VI. Sentence Development .....	77
VII. Paragraph Structure .....	85
VIII. Essay Structure .....	87
IX. Transitions .....	92
X. The Development of Paragraphs and Larger Forms	93
XI. The Modes of Writing .....	100

## PART THREE

Appendix I: Brief Readings .....	122
Appendix II: Suggestions for Composition .....	131
Appendix III: Communication and Audience .....	143
Appendix IV: The Context of Argument .....	145
Appendix V: Miscellaneous Structures .....	147
Appendix VI: Major Expository Forms .....	148
Appendix VII: Notes on Argument .....	150
Appendix VIII: Five Basic Sentence Patterns .....	159
Appendix IX: Clichés and Related Problems .....	167
Appendix X: Denotation and Connotation .....	173
Appendix XI: The Sources of Modern English .....	176
A Brief Usage Guide .....	185

## INTRODUCTION

This textbook was written for students of English who are beginning a high-intermediate or advanced level of study. Students in senior high school or college--or any person with a good basic background in English--should find the material helpful in reading and writing English. Instructors are advised that this book is a "guide"; no attempt is made to be comprehensive. In fact, this text's non-inclusiveness should allow flexibility in the classroom--instructors are encouraged to develop and use their own materials and techniques to illustrate the structure of the language. Insofar as possible, however, these materials should be taken from published non-fiction, fiction, and poetry, not from other textbooks. Oral and written drills and exercises are more effective when they exemplify actual communication, not mere pattern practice imagined by a textbook writer. This guide to English structure is designed for use with a book of readings in English. The readings should include the best contemporary non-fiction, fiction and poetry.

Students will also need a good collegiate dictionary (not a pocket-sized one), and perhaps second language students should have a dual-language dictionary as well. In addition, a loose-leaf or large bound notebook will be necessary. The assignments at the end of each unit should be written in the notebook; by the end of the course, each student will have a reference book containing examples of English structures--all compiled by himself or herself. The examples should be discussed in class, at the discretion of the instructor. The value of this reference notebook in the student's future studies will, of course, depend upon the initiative and interest of the individual student. It is important that none of the assignments for the student's notebook be taken from this textbook.

Most of the structures in sections I through IV (Part One) of this text will be familiar to the student; an attempt has been made to present the material in a clear and concise manner. These sections may be used for review or reference as well as a

guide for instruction. The basic structures in these sections must be mastered by each student before he or she attempts the structures in section V (Part Two).

The material in section V (Part Two) may be new to the instructor as well as the student. The method of analysis set forth here was developed several years ago by Francis Christensen while he was Professor of English at the University of Southern California, and it is outlined in his *Notes Toward A New Rhetoric* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967). This method is now being used in writing courses at several American universities. A knowledge of the structures described--sentences with "free modifiers" or "cumulative" sentences--is needed for any reader or writer of contemporary English. Many second-language learners may not have immediate access to contemporary (or even good modern) writing. Cumulative sentences have been called "the mark of a mature prose style," and one has only to read any recent writing in English to recognize the validity of the statement.

Models of business letters and models of library or research papers have not been included in this book. These are written for special audiences; the same basic rules may apply, but the formats are very different. Any number of handbooks containing examples of such material (the *Harbrace College Handbook* or *The Harper Handbook*, for example) are available to students who wish to write for these special audiences.

Finally, the materials in the Appendix (Part Three) allow the instructor to individualize the course according to the needs of the student or the class. Any of these appendixes may be used to supplement the concepts presented or to provide assistance for assigned coursework.

## DEFINITIONS

- Clause:** A group of related words which contains both a subject and a verb that indicates tense. Clauses may be “main” (independent) or “dependent”.
- Complement:** Words or phrases used to complete the sense of a sentence.
- Definite and Indefinite:** A definite article modifies a noun which refers to a specific person or thing. An indefinite article modifies a noun which refers to a non-specific person or thing. The antecedent of an indefinite pronoun is not specific.
- Object:** A noun (or substitute) governed by a transitive active verb, a non-finite verb, or a preposition.
- Phrase:** A group of related words which does not have both a subject and a verb that indicates tense.
- Predicate:** The main verb along with auxiliaries and any objects, compliments, and modifiers.
- Subject:** A noun (or substitute) about which something is said in the predicate.
- Cluster:** A group of words related to a “headword” or most important word in a unit called a “free modifier” (non-restrictive group of related words set off from a sentence by marks of punctuation).

**PART**  
**ONE**

# SENTENCE PARTS

#	Part of Speech	is used to	Examples
1	A noun	name a person, place, or thing.	Charles Dickens, umpire, rendition
2	A pronoun	replace a noun.	I, her, theirs, who, few
3	A verb	denote action, condition, state.	frying, breathe, negotiated
4	An adjective	modify a noun or pronoun.	cerulean, coy, grandiose, cogent
5	An adverb	modify a verb, an adjective, or another verb.	copiously, all, happily, then
6	A preposition	show relationship of a noun or a pronoun to another word.	into, from, of
7	A conjunction	join words or word groups.	and, but, or, although
8	An interjection	show emotion.	Stop! Yuck!
9	An article	introduce certain nouns.	a, an, the

# I. THE PARTS OF SPEECH

## NOUNS

A noun names a person, place, thing, idea, quality, collection, or action.

Alexander the Great, Michaelangelo, Bangkok, Robert Lowell, Dr. Martin Luther King, Tamkang University, Mercedes, Charles Dickens, Cao Xueqin, Pascal, J.M.W. Turner, Abbot Suger, Fez, *Moby-Dick*, the Territory of Guam, cybernetics, encomium, *The Tempest*, billet, choreography, Taroko Gorge, *Paradise Lost*, Confucius, panache, samovar, “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place,” contour, macrocosm, Mt. Pinatubo, motif, *Purgatorio*, quadrivium, Udmurt Republic, sumo, the PLO, New York, exordium, penuche, barrier, tyrant, rendition, hyperbola, wigwam, umpire, selenography, souk, organist, cardiogram, caliph, grass, vexation, procession, daytime, etc.

The types of nouns are as follows: *proper* or *common*, *abstract* or *concrete*, and *collective*.

A *proper noun* is the name of a particular person, place, or thing. Proper nouns are always capitalized: *King Hussein, Iceland, Vouvray, Golden Gate Bridge, Penates, Adam*.

A *common noun* does not name a particular person, place, or thing. These are not capitalized: *boy, person, salt, wine, country*.

An *abstract noun* names a quality, a characteristic, or an idea: *morality, hope, democracy, charity*.

A *concrete noun* names an object that can be perceived by the senses: *cloud, tree, stone, mansion*.

A *collective noun* names a group: *herd* (of cattle), *flock* (of birds), *class, team, committee*.

In regard to all these classes of things, the noun *mob*, for example, is a common, concrete, collective noun.

Sometimes two or more words will be joined together to form a *compound noun*. They may be written as one word (*doorknob*), as two words (*boarding school*), or with hyphens (*father-in-law*).

A pronoun replaces a noun with the words *I, you* (sg.), *he, she, it, we, you* (pl.), *they, that, this, these, who, which, each, some, either, nothing, few, many, all, one*, and others. As “objects,” personal pronouns change form: *me, him, her, us, them*; also note the “reflexive” and “intensive” pronouns--*myself, yourself, himself*, etc.

The word to which a pronoun refers (whose place it takes) is the *antecedent* of the pronoun. There are several kinds of pronouns: *personal, relative, interrogative, demonstrative, and indefinite*.

## Personal Pronouns

*Personal pronouns* are so called because they refer to first person (*I*), second person (*you*), or third person (*it, she, he*).

	Singular	Plural
1	I (me)	we (us)
2	you	you
3	she, he, it, (her, him)	they (them)

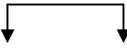
Possessive Forms		
my, mine	his, hers	our, ours
your, yours	hers, its	their, theirs

Personal reflexive and intensive pronouns are combined with *-self, -selves*:

They may be used reflexively.


<i>Jules Verne gave <u>himself</u> to the task of predicting the future of Western society.</i>

They may be used intensively for emphasis.


<i>Hawthorne <u>himself</u> could find no suitable answer to the question of the <i>felix culpa</i>.</i>

Reflexive and Intensive	
myself	ourselves
yourself	yourselves
himself, herself	themselves
itself	

## Relative Pronouns

*Relative pronouns* are used to introduce subordinate clauses:

that	whose
who	which
whom	

Gore Vidal writes that our English departments are now mostly staffed by second-raters.

## Interrogative Pronouns

*Interrogative pronouns* are used in questions:

who	which	whose
whom	what	

What, exactly, is Donatello in Hawthorne's romance, *The Marble Faun*?

Who was the mysterious writer called B.Traven?

## Demonstrative Pronouns

*Demonstrative pronouns* point to a particular person or thing. When they are used before nouns, they may be considered adjectives (*these barriers, that souk, those grasses*).

this	these	that	those
------	-------	------	-------

## Common Indefinite Pronouns

*Indefinite pronouns* refer generally, not specifically, to persons, places, or things.

all	either	more	one
another	everybody	much	several
any	everyone	neither	some
anybody	everything	nobody	somebody
anyone	few	none	someone
both	many	no one	such
each			

A substantive can be a noun or pronoun, but the term usually refers to a group of words which replaces a noun in a sentence--for example:

- a. Going over your instructor's head to make a complaint is considered *Substantive* unethical.

(Something) is considered unethical. [phrase + verb + adjective]  
(Something) is considered (by someone) unethical. [note passive voice]

b. Choosing one's method of death is desirable.

*Substantive*

c. The Wife of Bath said that she was born when Mars was in the constellation Taurus.

*Substantive*

d. To learn to write is to learn to have ideas.

*Substantive*

*Substantive*

-- Robert Frost

e. To have assumed that particular fate so early was the peculiarity of my generation.

*Substantive*

-- Joan Didion

Nouns may be further divided into “count” and “non-count” types:

**COUNT:** one *blackbird*, two *blackbirds*, three *blackbirds*, etc.  
one *satire*, two *satires*, three *satires*, etc.  
one *linguist*, two *linguists*, three *linguists*, etc.

Count nouns may be singular or plural.

**NON-COUNT:** *dirt, steel, advice, meat, coldness, sugar, milk, diplomacy, ignorance, hatred, optimism, courage, colonialism, information, etc.*

Non-count nouns are singular only.

Collective nouns, in which more than one constitutes a unit, are singular--*committee, class, group*, etc.

“Abstract” nouns are often non-countable. When they refer to specific acts, however, they may be counted

singular and plural: His *kindnesses* (acts of kindness) were appreciated by his colleagues.

**ASSIGNMENT: Nouns and substantives. Write in your notebook some nouns or noun substitutes selected from your reading inside and outside of class. Write down the sentence as well. Select only those nouns and substantives which seem interesting to you. Indicate the type of noun or pronoun as applicable and write “count” or “non-count” after each.**

## VERBS

A verb denotes action, condition, or state of condition.

will rescind, accomplished, fell, is suspended, erupting, to protest, had ambled, will bury, do recall, is commencing, to stir, shakes, would end, to criticize, heightened, toss, will emigrate, to climb, could discern, did think, am sketching, describes, glide, have encountered, to forge, pull, will have justified, to frequent, are lagging, would disparage, do resist, employ, was combining, to behold, preferred, swallowed, to realize, has obliged, will loom, shall lop, to hoist, will fret, did inquire, breathe, frying, will attain, have acquired, are encroaching, to contain, will iterate, to arouse, exempt, to bid, to persuade, will negotiate, monopolize, enabled, should have rectified, etc.

The main verb in a sentence must be finite (must indicate tense). Non-finite verb forms include present and past participles (verb + *ing* and verb + *ed*) and infinitives (to + verb).

Some verbs make a statement by expressing action. The action may be physical, as in *fell*, *pull*, *fry*, *bid*, or mental, as in *pretend* and *hate*.

### Action Verbs

Action verbs may or may not take an object--a noun or pronoun that completes the action by showing who or what is affected by the action. Verbs that call for objects are *transitive*; the word that completes the action by naming the person or thing affected is the *object*. The verbs in the following examples are transitive.

Thomas Carlyle lost his manuscript.

[*Manuscript* is the object of *lost*.]

The chef appreciated the applause.

[*Applause* is the object of *appreciated*.]

Everyone at the music camp played the violin.

[*Violin* is the object of *played*.]

Transitive verbs are followed by an object to complete the sentence; intransitive verbs do not require an object, although they may be followed by one or more complements.

$V_t =$  We *enjoyed* the film version of the Glass Menagerie.

$V_t$  + Direct Object

$V_t =$  The country twice *elected* Bill Clinton president.

$V_t$  + Direct Object + Object Complement

*Intransitive verbs* can express action without an object:

$V_i =$  The sleigh stopped.

or

$V_i =$  The sleigh *stopped* "without a farmhouse near."

$V_i$  + Complement

Although some verbs are transitive only (*extract*) and some intransitive only (*fall*), most verbs can be either.

## Linking Verbs (V<sub>L</sub>)

Some intransitive verbs that do not express action are called *linking verbs*. They connect, or link, to the subject a noun, pronoun, or adjective that identifies or modifies it. The word linked to the subject is the *subject complement*.

### EXAMPLES:



The crane is the Chinese symbol for longevity.  
[*Symbol* is the *subject complement* that refers to the subject *crane*.]



She became our department's chair. [*Chair* refers to *she*.]



The kimchi was too spicy. [*Spicy* refers to *kimchi*.]

The subject complement may identify the subject, as in the first two examples, or modify it, as in the third.

Linking verbs are sometimes referred to as state-of-being verbs. The most frequently used linking verb is the verb *be* and its forms, *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, *be*, *being*, *been*, and all verb phrases ending in *be*, *being*, or *been*; for example, *have been*, *could have been*, *can be*, *should be*, etc. Other linking verbs are :

appear	grow	seem	stay
become	look	smell	taste
feel	remain	sound	get

The verb *be*, and some other linking verbs, can also be followed by certain adverbs of place: He was *there*. She stayed *home*. In these instances the verbs are not linking verbs.

Linking verbs do not express action; they act as a link between the subject and the words following the verb.

Some verbs may be used as either action or linking verbs.

In general, one may identify a linking verb if *is* or *was* may be substituted for it.

You cannot make such a substitution, however, in a sentence with an action verb.

Verbs are inflected as follows (in the active voice, indicative mood):

Infinitive	<i>“to shake”</i>
Principal parts:	<i>shake, shook, shaken</i>
	<b>Present Tense</b>
I/you/we/they	<i>shake</i>
he/she/it	<i>shakes</i>
	<b>Past Tense</b>
I/he/you/we/they	<i>shook</i>
	<b>Future Tense</b>
I/he/you/we/they	<i>will (or shall) shake</i>
	<b>Present Perfect* Tense</b>
I/you/we/they	<i>have shaken</i>
he/she/it	<i>has shaken</i>
	<b>Past Perfect Tense</b>
I/he/you/we/they	<i>had shaken</i>
	<b>Future Perfect Tense</b>
I/he/you/we/they	<i>will (or shall) have shaken</i>

\* “Perfect” tenses indicate completed action.

The “progressive” or “continuous” form (be + verb + *ing*) of verbs is used to denote action in progress:

**Present Tense:**

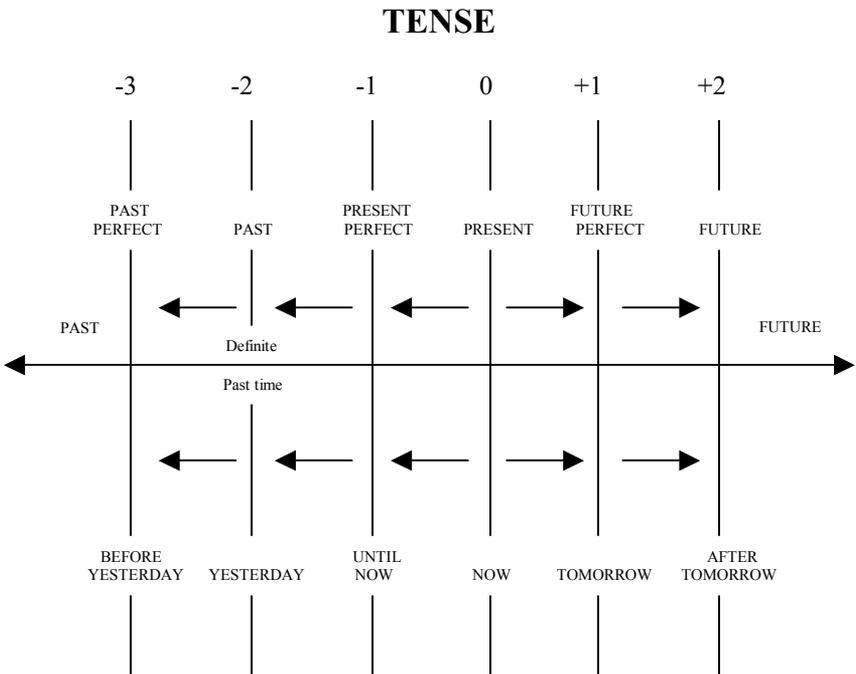
*I am shaking; she is shaking, you are shaking, etc.*

**Past Tense:**

*I was shaking; she was shaking, you were shaking, etc.*

These are finite verbs.

The time relationship of the six verb tenses may be roughly indicated by the following diagram:



## The Auxiliary Verb and the Verb Groups

A *verb group* is a verb of more than one word. It is made up of a main verb and one or more *auxiliary verbs*. Verbs are so called because they work with the main verb to express action or make a statement. The auxiliary verbs in the following verb phrases are printed in bold-faced type:

<b>have</b> written	<b>will be</b> forgiven
<b>should be</b> hanged	<b>might have been</b> awake

## Common Auxiliary Verbs

do	has	can (may) have
did	had	could (would, should) be
does	can	could (would, should) have
am	may	will (shall) have been
are	will (shall) be	might have
is	will (shall) have	might have been
was has	(had) been	must have
were	can (may) be	must have been
have		

A word ending in *-ing* may be used as part of a verb group or as an adjective.

The parts of a verb group may be separated from one another by other words; i.e., the auxiliary verb may be separated from the main verb.

A verb may consist of a “main” verb and its auxiliaries. Some of these auxiliary verbs are:

*have, be, do, will, shall, can, would, should, could, may, must, etc.*

In the passive voice, the “action” is received by the subject of the sentence:

**Active Voice:** The sheriff arrested him. (S + V + O)

**Passive Voice:** He was arrested [by the sheriff].  
(S + be + V<sub>past participle</sub> + Agent: stated or implied.)

The present tense sometimes indicates habitual activity, or the “historical present,” or the future.

For regular verbs, the past tense and past participle are formed by adding *-ed*, *-d*, or *-t* to the infinitive form.

An irregular verb does not form its past tense and past participle in the ordinary manner:

swim, swam, swum  
beat, beat, beat or beaten  
feel, felt, felt  
send, sent, sent  
set, set, set  
cut, cut, cut

be, was, been  
eat, ate, eaten  
come, came, come  
shake, shook, shaken  
fly, flew, flown  
begin, began, begun

The following is a list of common but troublesome verbs you should learn:

arise, arose, arisen  
ask, asked, asked  
awake, awoke, or awaked  
bathe, bathed, bathed  
bear, bore, borne  
(born=passive)  
become, became, become  
bend, bent, bent

bid<sup>1</sup>, bid, bid (purchase)  
bid<sup>2</sup>, bade, bidden or bid  
(command)  
bite, bit, bitten or bit  
blow, blew, blown  
break, broke, broken  
bring, brought, brought  
burn, burned or burnt

cast, cast, cast	lie <sup>1</sup> , lay, lain (recline)
catch, caught, caught	lie <sup>2</sup> , lied, lied (to tell a falsehood)
choose, chose, chosen	light, lighted or lit
cling, clung, clung	lose, lost, lost
cost, cost, cost	ride, rode, ridden
creep, crept, crept	ring, rang, rung
dig, dug or digged	rise, rose, risen
dive, dived, dived	saw, sawed, sawed
do, did, done	say, said, said
draw, drew, drawn	see, saw, seen
dream, dreamed or dreamt	seek, sought, sought
drink, drank, drunk	shut, shut, shut
fall, fell, fallen	sing, sang or sung, sung
flee, fled, fled	sink, sank or sunk, sunk
forget, forgot, forgotten or forgot	sleep, slept, slept
forgive, forgave, forgiven	slide, slid, slid
freeze, froze, frozen	speak, spoke, spoken
give, gave, given	spin, spun, spun
go, went, gone	steal, stole, stolen
grow, grew, grown	strike, struck, struck
hang <sup>1</sup> , hung, hung (suspend)	string, strung, strung
hang <sup>2</sup> , hanged, hanged (kill by suspending)	swear, swore, sworn
help, helped, helped	swing, swung, swung
hit, hit, hit	take, took, taken
keep, kept, kept	tear, tore, torn
know, knew, known	tie, tied, tied
lay, laid, laid (place)	wake, waked or woke, waked
lead, led, led	wear, wore, worn
leap, leaped or leapt	weep, wept, wept
let, let, let	weave, wove, woven

**ASSIGNMENT:** Write down some verbs (with and without auxiliaries) from your reading inside and outside of class. Include some infinitives and non-finite verbs and label them. Try to select only those verbs which seem interesting to you.