LANGUAGE FORMS AND FUNCTIONS

Collaborative Task 1

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Introduction

This work reviews the grammatical categories (gender, case, degree, definiteness, tense, aspect, mood, and voice) and the distinction within each category. Later, the classification of words will be examined with detail here.

The afore mentioned concepts will be presented in a didactic way, with the aim of facilitating its appropriation and comprehension.

Grammatical morphemes express grammatical notions, such as number or tense, what are called the grammatical categories.

What is a grammatical category?

A grammatical category is a set of syntactic features that express meanings from the same conceptual domain, occur in contrast to each other, and are typically expressed in the same fashion.

Grammatical morphemes may be either free roots (function words) or bound affixes (inflectional suffixes). Semantically, grammatical morphemes express grammatical notions such as number or tense, what are called grammatical categories. Itn synthetic languages such as Classic Latin or Greek, the grammatical categories are expressed almost exclusively by inflectional endings, whereas in analytic languages such as present-day English, the grammatical categories are expressed primarily by word order, and by function words.

The following list of grammatical categories will be exposed through the nominal categories **(number, gender, person, case, degree, definitiness)** and then the verbal categories **(tense, aspect, mood, and voice).**

Number
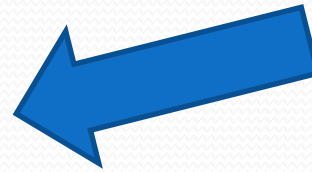
This first category is relatively simple. There are two terms of this category in English: singular (the concept of one) and plural (the concept of more than one). Number is expressed by inflection, generally by **-s:**

- ❖ In count nouns (*dog/dogs*)
- ❖ In demonstratives (*this/these*, *that/those*)
- ❖ In the 1st and 3rd p of personal pronouns (*I/we*), possessive determiners (*my/our*), possessive pronouns (*mine/ours*), and reflexive pronouns (*myself/ourselves*), but not in the 2nd person. Number is also expressed by distinct forms of certain pronouns and adjectives:

- ❖ **Singular:** *every*, *each*, *someone*, *anybody*, *a/an*
- ❖ **Plural:** *all*, *many*, *few*, *several*, *most*

Number is also expressed:

In a limited way in verbs, by the singular -*s* of the 3rd p which occurs in the present but not in the past tense:

❖ *he writes* versus *they write*, *he wrote*.

Number is expressed more fully in the inflected forms of the verb 'to be' :

❖ Singular: *am*, *is*, *was*
❖ Plural: *are*, *were*

Gender

English has a rather straightforward system of gender called natural gender, as opposed to the seemingly less motivated system called grammatical gender. Grammatical gender, the system found in earlier stages of English, appears to be arbitrary here:

❖ Gender is not related to the sex of the object denoted but is really just a means of sub classifying nouns as masculine/feminine or masculine /feminine/neuter.

❖ In contrast, natural gender depends on the sex of the object in the real world. In this system, we distinguish masculine, feminine, common or dual (m or f), and neuter (sexless) genders.

❖ Gender is expressed by inflection only in personal pronouns, and only in the 3rd person, singular: *he*, *she*, *it*

❖ The 1st and 2nd person forms: *I, we*, and *you* are common gender.

❖ while the 3rd person plural form *they* is either common gender or neuter (*the people. they, the boats, they).*

❖ Relative and interrogative pronouns and some other pronouns inflectionally express a related category of animacy (animate/inanimate): *who, whom*, *what*, *which*, *somebody/one* vs. *something*, *anybody/one* vs. *anything*.

❖ In nouns, gender is generally a covert category shown by the co-occurrence of relevant pronouns: *the boy…he*, *the girl…she*. However, gender may also be expressed overtly on the English noun in a number of limited ways:

1. By derivational suffixes, such as the feminine suffixes **-ine** (*hero/heroine*), **-ess** (*god/goddess*), -**rix** (*aviator/aviatrix*), and -**ette** (*suffragist/suffragette*) or the common gender suffixes -**er** (*baker*), -**ist** (*artist*), -**ian** (*librarian*), -**ster** (*prankster*), and -**ard** (*drunkard*);

2. by compounds, such as *lady-*, *woman-*, *girl-*, *female-*, -*woman* or *boy-*, *male-*, *gentleman-*,
-*man*;
3. by separate forms for masculine, feminine, and common genders, such as *boy/girl/child*
or *rooster/hen/chicken*; and

4. by separate forms for masculine and feminine genders, such as *uncle/aunt*, *horse/mare*, *bachelor/spinster* and proper names such as *Joseph/Josephine*, *Henry/Henrietta*.

Person:

The category of person is quite simple. Three terms are recognized:
- ❖ 1st person: the speaker, person speaking;
- ❖ 2nd person: the addressee/hearer, person spoken to; and
- ❖ 3rd person: the person or thing spoken about.

Person distinctions are expressed by the inflected forms of the pronouns, for example:

Personal pronouns:	I	You	He, they
Personal possesive determiners:	my	your	His, their
Personal possesive pronouns:	mine	yours	His, theirs
Personal reflexive pronouns:	Myself	Yourself	Himself, themselves

Person is also expressed inflectionally in the singular, present tense, indicative of verbs by the -*s* inflection on the 3rd person: *I write* vs. *she writes*.

❖ It is also expressed more fully in the verb 'to be': *I am/was*, *we are/were.*

❖ (1st person), *you are/were*

❖ (2nd person), *he/she/it is/was*, *they are/were* (3rd person).

❖ Nouns are all 3rd person, but this is shown only covertly by the
❖ co-occurrence of pronouns: *the house…it (*I, *you)*, *the houses…they (*we, *you)*.

Case

Case is one of the more difficult categories. It may be defined rather simply as an indication of the function of a noun phrase, or the relationship of a noun phrase to a verb or to other noun phrases in the sentence.

❖ Case is most fully expressed in the personal and interrogative/relative pronouns, which distinguish nominative case (the function of subject).

❖ Genitive case (the function of possessor), and

❖ Objective case (the function of object) by different inflected forms:

❖ Nominative: *I*, *we*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *they*, *who*;
❖ Genitive: *my/mine*, *our/ours*, *his*, *her/hers*, *its*, *their/theirs*, *whose*; and
❖ Objective: *me*, *us*, *you*, *him*, *her*, *it*, *them*, *whom*.

Degree

Degree is a category that relates to adjectives and adverbs. It has three terms, positive, comparative, and superlative.

❖ Positive degree expresses a quality, comparative degree expresses greater degree or intensity of the quality in one of two items.

❖ Superlative degree expresses greatest degree or intensity of the quality in one of three or more items. The positive degree is expressed by the root of the adjective (e.g., *big*, *beautiful*) or adverb (e.g., *fast*, *quickly*)—that is, it is null-realized.

❖ Comparative and superlative degrees are expressed either by inflection or by periphrasis (using *more*, *most*):

Positive	0	Big	Fast	Beautiful	Quickly
Comparative	-er, more	bigger	faster	More beautiful	More quickly
Superlative	-est, most	biggest	Fastest	Most beautiful	Most quickly

Definiteness

The concepts of definiteness and indefiniteness are intuitively quite simple:

❖ Definite denotes a referent (a thing in the real world denoted by a noun) which is known, familiar, or identified to the speaker and hearer.

❖ Indefinite denotes a referent which is novel, unfamiliar, or not known.

❖ "Definite" and "indefinite" are terms which are usually applied to noun phrases.

❖ In English, the is referred to as "the definite article", and a/an as "the indefinite article". Noun phrases which begin with the (e.g. the Queen of England, the book), which are also called "definite descriptions", are generally taken to be prototypical examples of definite noun phrases in English.

Verbal categories: Tense

Tense is a linguistic category, it has two different forms:

a). I <u>saw</u> a movie last night
b). I wish you <u>would</u> go.

Past tense expresses past time in **(a),** but it expresses future time in (**b).** We see that the present time expresses a timeless habit in (a) and a future time in (b), neither expressing an action ocurring at the present moment.

❖ Grammatical categories can thus be defined either by formal or informal means.

By these criteria, English has only two tense distinctions, **past and present: (work/worked).**

In the second case however, there is assumed to be a universal set of grammatical categories and terms, which for tense are past, present, and future, by periphrasis (as in I will work).

Aspect

Aspect is a category applicable to English since the so-called "compound tenses", the perfect and the progressive, are better treated as expressions of the aspect. Aspect can be defined as the view taken of an event, or the "aspect" under which it is considered, basically whether it is seen as complete and whole (perfective aspect) or as incomplete and ongoing (imperfective aspect). Aspect can be summarized as follows:

The simple aspect (Indefinite Aspect)	Example
Simple past tense	I went
Simple present tense	I go
Simple future tense	Will

The perfect aspect (Completed aspect)	Example
Past perfect tense	I had gone
Present perfect tense	I have gone
Future perfect tense	I will have gone

The progressive aspect (Continuing aspect)	Example
Past progressive tense	I was going
Present progressive tense	I am going
Future progressive t tense	I will be going

The perfect progressive aspect	Example
Past perfect progressive tense	I had been going
Present perfect progressive tense	I have been going
Future perfect progressive t tense	I will have been going

Mood

Mood is an indication of the speaker's attitude towards what he or she is talking about, wether the event is considered fact or non fact. The indicative is the mood of fact; it is expressed by the simple and compound tenses of the verb. Nonfact enompasses a number of different degrees of reality, including whises, desires, requests, warnings, prohibitions, commands, predictions possibilities, and contrary to-fact occurrences. It has two primary subcategories, the imperative and the subjunctive.

❖ The imperative is a one of the two non-facts moods. It is used to express direct comands. In English the imperative has a special syntactic form: it is a subjectless containing a bare form of the ver as in Go!, Be quiet! , Don't disturb me!

❖ The subjunctive is othe r non-fact mood. In present day English, the subjunctive is expressed by modal auxiliares or their phrasal equivalent as in:

❖ He may leave .   You shouldn't wait
❖ I can't find my keys   Would you pass the salt?
❖ It might rain   You ought to try harder

Voice

The category of voice, though usually considered a category of the verb, is actually relevant to the entire sentence. Voice is an indication of whether the subject is performing action of the verb or being something (active voice) or whether the subject is being affected by the action or being acted upon (passive voice).While the active is expressed by the simple forms of the verb, the passive is expressed periphrastically:

- ❖ *By be* + the past participle, as in *The report was written (by the committee)*; or
- ❖ By *get* + the past participle, as in *The criminal got caught (by the police)*.

In conclusion…

We can approach the categories from a different perspective by noting
which different parts of speech each of the grammatical categories is relevant to:

- ❖ Nouns: number, gender, case, (person), and definiteness;
- ❖ Pr onouns: number, gender, case, and person;
- ❖ Adjec tives and some adverbs: degree; and
- ❖ V erbs: number, person, tense, aspect, mood, and voice.

Determining word classes

❖ Traditionally, eight word classes are recognized: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, preposition, conjunction and interjection (or article).

The noun:

❖ A noun is a word which is used to denote a person (*traffic warden, woman, Prime Minister, pianist* etc.)

❖ A concrete or abstract entity (*binoculars, fork, field, truth, incoherence* etc.)

❖ Or a place (*office, garden, railway station*).

These are all **common nouns**; there are also **proper nouns** which are the names of a specific person, place, event etc., usually starting with a capital letter, for example: *Y ork* , *John*, *Christmas*, *Saturday*.

Proper nouns are distinguished from **common nouns** in that they denote a unique referent; they cannot, therefore, be pluralized. Count nouns denote items that are individuated and can be pluralized and counted, while mass (noncount) nouns denote substances that exist in bulk or unspecified quantities.

The verb:

A group of words cannot be described as a sentence or a clause unless at least one of the words is a verb. In some ways, we can describe it as the most important part of speech because it is the 'action' word that tells the listener or reader what is happening in the sentence.

❖ Verbs can be 'action' words like *run*, *initiate*, *judge*, *throw*, but they can also denote less active notions and have more to do with mental processes and perceptions, like *see*, *know*, *think* and so on.

❖ There are several distributional tests for the category verb; these serve to subclassify verbs. Certain verbs, known as transitive verbs, such as *buy*, *break*, *learn*, *give*, or *hit*, may precede noun phrases:

The adjective

An adjective gives the reader or speaker extra information about a noun or delimits it in some way. It can occur in two positions in a phrase:

❖ before the noun as in clear water, beautiful beaches, a terrible decision. The adjectives in these examples are said to be **attributive**.

❖ following any form of the verb be (e.g. am, is, was, been) and similar verbs (seem, appear ,become) as in the water became clear, the beaches are beautiful. These adjectives are **inpredicative** position.

The adverb

The traditional approach to adverbs has been to assign mainly those words which are made from adjectives by the addition of the ending –*ly* (*quickly*, *hopelessly*), plus certain other words which are difficult to classify, like *not*, *just* and *soon*.

❖ Their main function is to qualify the action of the verb in the clause in some way, but they can also be used to add more information to an adjective or other adverb e.g. **awfully** *good*, **incredibly** *slowly*.

❖ The class of adverbs is very wide-ranging in form and is used to add comments to many of the other word classes.

❖ The category of adverb (Adv) is rather difficult to differentiate. A small number of what are traditionally recognized as adverbs take the comparative inflectional endings -*er* and -*est*, but most are uninflected.

Pronouns

❖ Pronouns are usually treated as a special sub-class of nouns. This is because they stand in for a noun or group of nouns. They are limited in number and belong to what is called a **closed set**, that is, a group of words to which new members are, for practical purposes, not allowed. Some examples of pronouns are: *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *our*, *its*, *something*, *anyone* and so on.

Prepositions

Prepositions allow us to talk about the way in which two parts of a sentence are related to each other. They include words like *in, on, under, beside, through, inside, before, opposite.* More often than not, these relationships are to do with either time or space, but other types of relationship, such as possession, cause and effect and method can be expressed by using prepositions.

❖ Unless they are part of a verb (*get**in***, *pick **up***, *switch **off***), prepositions are always followed by a phrase containing a noun – *at school*, *in the summer*, *over the moon* and so on.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions serve to connect two or more clauses, phrases or words together to make longer constructions.

❖ There are two types of conjunction. The first is the **coordinating** conjunction. This type is always used to connect elements that share the same grammatical status, that is, main clause to main clause, verb to verb, noun to noun, adjective to adjective and so on.

❖ The second type is the **subordinating** conjunction, which most often joins two or more unequal clauses to one another. Typically a main clause will be connected to a subordinate clause.

Interjection

An **interjection** is a word used to express a particular emotion or sentiment on the part of the speaker.

❖ Filled pauses such as *uh*, *er*, *um* are also considered interjections. Interjections are often placed at the beginning of a sentence.

❖ An interjection is sometimes expressed as a single word or non-sentence phrase, followed by a punctuation mark.

❖ Conventions like *Hi*, *Bye* and *Goodbye* are interjections, as are exclamations like *Cheers!* and *Hooray!*. They are very often characterized by exclamation marks depending on the stress of the attitude or the force of the emotion they are expressing.

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