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Word Categories in English

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ABSTRACT

Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, numerals, articles, and interjections are the ten word classes (or parts of speech) that are traditionally used to categorize words for the sake of grammatical description. Although each of these concepts is helpful and essential for practical purposes, it is debatable as to whether or not they belong in a completely clear description of a language or in general grammatical theory. Although most of the classic word class distinctions can be made in most languages, it is frequently difficult to apply these ideas across linguistic boundaries. The three main word classes—noun, verb, and adjective—as well as strategies for coping with the cross-linguistic heterogeneity in their patterning—are the main topics of this essay.

KEYWORDS: *word categories, English, Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, numerals, articles, and interjections.*

There are several ways to categorize words, including phonological characteristics (such as monosyllabic vs. polysyllabic words), social considerations (such as general and technical vocabulary), and language history (e.g., loanwords vs. native words). These are all word classes, although in technical parlance, "word class" refers to the ten conventional groups listed below (and possibly a few more), the majority of which date back to the Greek and Roman grammarians. In addition to the terms, each word class is illustrated by a few examples.

- Noun: book, storm, arrival;
- Verb: push, sit, know;
- Adjective: good, blue, wonderful;
- Adverb: constantly, quickly, unfortunately;
- Pronoun: I, you, this, nobody;
- Preposition: on, for, because of;
- Conjunction: and, if, while;
- Numeral: one, twice, third;
- Articles: the, a, an;
- Interjection: ouch, tsk, ops.

The classification described above has a special position since these are the classes of words that need to be described in terms of grammar the most; they are also essential in terms of morphology, syntax, and lexical semantics. As a result, the classification is not only more fascinating than other

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word categories, but also more challenging. The term part of speech, which predates the term class but is nevertheless often used today despite being somewhat ambiguous (originally it referred to sentence constituents). In the first half of the 20th century, structuralist linguistics popularized the phrase "word class."

Syntactic category is another roughly identical concept, particularly in Chomskyan linguistics (which technically refers not only to lexical categories like nouns and verbs, but also to phrasal categories like noun phrases and verb phrases). The two main issues with the maximal word class presented above are (a) that some of the classes overlap (for example, the English word "there" is both a pronoun and an adverb), and (b) that the different classes are not given equal weight. While most languages have hundreds of verbs and thousands of nouns, there are typically far fewer pronouns and conjunctions, as well as only a few ad positions and articles.

Clearly dividing words into main word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) and minor word classes is a common solution to the second issue (all others). The fact that pronouns and numerals are not considered to be word classes on par with nouns, verbs, prepositions, and other word classes is the implicit solution to the first issue in much contemporary work. Rather, they are thought of as highly specialised semantic subclasses of the other classes. For instance, there are adverbial pronouns, adjectival pronouns (such as *this*, *which*, and *such*), and nominal pronouns (such as *he*, *who*) (e.g., *here*, *thus*). Similar numerals include adjectival ones (*five*, *fifth*), adverbial ones (*twice*), and nominal ones (*five*) (*a fifth*, *a five*). Verbal pronouns and verbal numbers are also present in several languages. Accordingly, this article will not deal with pronouns (see *Pronouns*) and numerals (see *Numerals Systems*).

The two main categories of content words and function words can be used to categorize words (and entire word classes) across all languages. Ad positions, conjunctions, and articles, as well as auxiliaries and words labeled as "particles," are function words. Nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are content words. The usefulness and significance of these two broad categories are undeniable, despite the occasional debate over the placement of specific terms and even entire word classes within them. The majority of word classes are large (comprising hundreds or thousands of words) and open (i.e., they allow new members in principle), and content words typically have a clear, concrete meaning. They frequently have longer disyllabic vowels and have a low text frequency. Contrarily, function word classes are typically tiny, closed, and have an abstract or broad meaning (or no meaning at all, but only a grammatical function in specific constructions). Finally, grammatical agreement reflects the fact that nouns are typically categorized as belonging to one of multiple gender classes (see *Grammatical Gender*).

In many languages, affixes to verbs signify tense (present, past, future), aspect (imperfective, perfective progressive), mood (indicative, imperative, optative, subjunctive, etc.), polarity (affirmative, negative), valence-changing operations (passive causative, and Argument Structure in Syntax), as well as the person number of the subject and object(s) (see *Grammatical Agreement*). The two semantic concepts of spatial orientation and instrument are more frequently articulated morphologically.

In conclusion, just as they are on this page, spaces are used to separate words. But this straightforward response is reliant on the presence of writing. We typically do not halt or leave a space between words when speaking. Most historical languages have not been recorded in writing. We do not wish to imply that words only exist in written languages and that, even in written languages, spacing does not offer a fully satisfactory solution. For instance, English compounds can be spelled in one of three ways: open, closed, or hyphenated. Some words, such as *birdhouse*, *bird-house*, or *bird house*, can be spelled in any of these three ways without causing any obvious changes.

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If we accepted spaces as a criterion, we would have to declare that the first spelling is one word, the last two words, and the middle spelling is neither one word nor two. The more accurate conclusion is that spelling rules do not always indicate whether or not something is a word. Some linguists sidestep the issue by asserting that the concept of a "word" in its whole is theoretically unsound and only a product of spelling.

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