The Grammar of English Ideas

A Re-imagining of English Grammar for Language Teachers

Robert A. Buckmaster

An English Ideas Monograph

English Ideas

The Grammar of English Ideas
Distance, Meaning and Conventions
A Re-imagining of English Grammar for Language Teachers
by Robert A. Buckmaster

Edited by Vita Kalnberzina Ph.D.

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And last but definitely not least - without Ilona, Julia, Alexander and Markus I wouldn't have been able to do this - this book is for you.

1 Introduction

This book is about the current pedagogical grammar of English which is taught on training and degree courses to teachers and then taught by those teachers to learners. It is also about a new pedagogical grammar which *should be taught* to teachers and *taught by them* to their learners. The reasons why this new pedagogical grammar is needed will be discussed and demonstrated in Part Three of this book.

The Parts of the Book

After this Introduction, Part Two presents the main concepts found in current coursebook grammars and grammar practice materials aimed at teenagers and adults. It is based on a reading of, and over twenty years experience of using, mainstream coursebooks and supplementary materials and grammars. If you want to teach within the current orthodoxy of English language teaching as represented by the materials sold by the main publishers e.g. the Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, Macmillan and Pearson etc. then you will need to understand this grammar and be able to teach it.

The third part of the book looks at some of the deficiencies in the grammar interpretation presented in coursebooks and highlights the serious inadequacies of this current pedagogical description of English. Is this traditional grammar, which is largely based on a pre-computer corpus understanding of English, fit for purpose? Or does it need to be improved or changed or *re-imagined* in the light of all that we have learned about language in the last 40 years? The answer is obviously, I think, yes.

Parts Four to Eight are my responses to these challenges to the orthodox grammar. A new pedagogical English grammar is presented as a set of ideas and power conventions rather than *rules* to be learnt [or even learned]. This is the essential knowledge base of the language. The *rules of use* approach of current coursebook grammars and grammar practice books like '*Murphy*' or '*Azar*' is replaced by an *ideas of meaning* approach. This is a system of Distance, Meanings and Conventions: the *G[DMC]* which fits in with the Associative Model of English. It is a complete re-imagining of English grammar.

Part Nine draws some conclusions and adds further thoughts on the issues of grammar and grammar teaching. In the Afterword I have a dig at Noam Chomsky because I could not resist the temptation, and there is an action plan for those of you, like me, who are unfortunate enough to be MELTS: Mono-lingual English Language Teachers.

The Bibliography does not just include works I reference in the text but other works on grammar I have found interesting, so it is more of a reading list.

The Main Arguments

The main arguments made in this re-imagining of English grammar are:

1. English is convention-based not rule-based.
2. All words have meanings; some have form meanings as well.
3. Words combine [bond] with *co-text* [other words] to create utterances and sentences which mean something in the *context* they are used.
4. How words bond together is governed by the conventions of the language - especially the conventions of collocations [words which mean together, appear together], and the *conventions of the sequence* [i.e. word order] which can form *pathways of choices*.

5. There is an underlying *deep structure* system of distance which can be seen in some word form meanings, and in the conventions of the sequence, and in sentence and utterance structure.
6. Language is about making associations between words clear for meaning purposes. Languages differ in how they achieve this but [perhaps] all languages follow the broad outline of the Associative Model - the differences are in the details: English is heavily reliant on word order and thus word proximity; some other languages are not.

The Main Grammatical Metaphors

The main grammatical metaphors in this grammar are drawn from chemistry, journeys and relationships. From chemistry comes the idea of chemical bonds between atoms, which in language are the bonds between phonemes and the bonds between words. From journeys comes the idea of, well, journeys - in language there are word-idea journeys from a starting point to an end point destination, and the idea of conventional pathways [the routes most taken] through sequences of verbs and through the sequence of words which can come before or after a noun. From relationships comes the idea of associations between words; indeed the model of language used here is the Associative Model.

A Note on the Use of L1

This book is written with the knowledge that most teachers are in the position of knowing their learners' L1 and are able, if they so wish, to use this shared language to make learning more efficient. I wholly support this as long as it is done in a principled manner. Part Nine of the book contains an action plan for those, like myself, who are unable to do this.

A Note on Terminology

The terminology used in English pedagogical grammars can be slightly confusing. The *present continuous* [e.g. *am swimming*] is the same as the *present progressive* [e.g. *am drowning*]. *Modal verbs* [e.g. *will* and *would*] are the same as *modal auxiliary verbs* [e.g. *can* and *should*]. The *primary auxiliary verbs* [*be, do* and *have*] are sometimes known as *helping verbs*. *Do* is sometimes called the *dummy auxiliary*, except when, like *have* and *be* it is being used as a main verb. The *auxiliaries be, do* and *have* are different from the main verbs *be, do* and *have*. *Main verbs* are also called *lexical verbs*. The *base form* of the verb [e.g. *be, go*] is the same as the *first form* [e.g. *help, quit*] and is almost always the same as the *infinitive* of the verb [e.g. *eat, sleep*] and these are mostly the same as the *first person singular present simple* [e.g. *I eat, I go*] but not when it comes to *be* [e.g. *I am*]. *Infinitives* [e.g. *go*] are the same as *infinitive without to* [e.g. *go*] and the same as *infinitives with to* [but they have a *to*; e.g. *to go*]. The *infinitive* is also the same as the *imperative* [e.g. *Go!*].

Some writers claim there are two *tenses* - past and present - and two *aspects* - continuous [or progressive] and perfect. Other writers label the combinations of these two tenses and aspects as separate *tenses* e.g. the *present perfect continuous [or progressive] passive*. The *present participle* [e.g. *sleeping*] can be used in such past 'tenses' e.g. *He was sleeping soundly*. *Present participles* are also known as *–ing forms* and look the same as *gerunds* [e.g. *sleeping*], which can also be called *verbal nouns* [e.g. *waking*]. The *past participle* [e.g. *gone, finished*] can be also be used for some present 'tenses' e.g. *I am finished*. The *past participle* is also known as the *third form*. The *second form* [e.g. *went, had*] is the same thing as the *first person singular simple past* [e.g. *looked, taught*].

Confused? I'm not surprised.

Who is this book for?

This book is for everyone involved in English language teaching/learning. For teachers, trainers, materials writers, publishers and, most of all, for learners. Every teacher needs to understand the current grammar, outlined in Part Two, because you can't teach now without such an understanding. Everyone should then move on to consider the new grammar which learners deserve.

The Website

No book like this nowadays is without its own website and this book is no exception. The *www.englishideas.org* site has a visual grammar which will help you teach the ideas in this book.

Robert Buckmaster

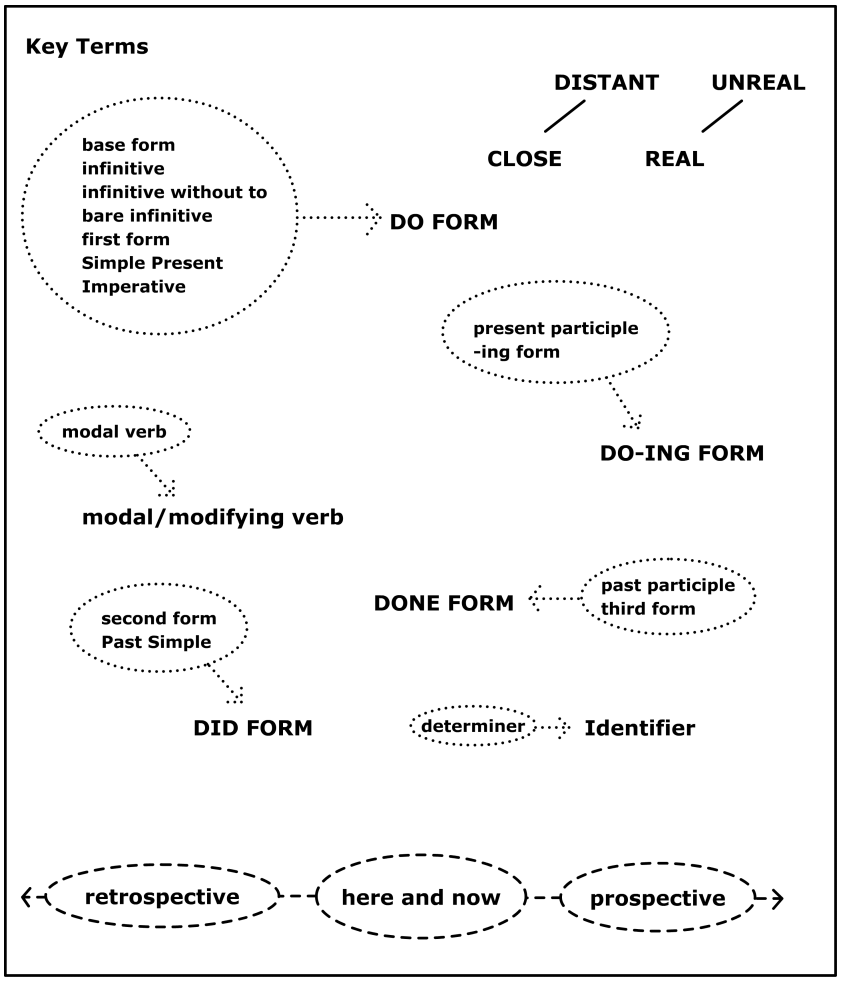


Figure 1.1: Key Terms

The Associative Model diagrams use a number of abbreviations to label word forms.

Abbreviations

Adjective: adj
Adverb: adv
Conjunction: conj
Did Form: DdF
Do Form: DF
Done Form: DnF
Do-ing Form: D-ing
Do-ing Verb: vD-ing
Identifier: ident
Modal Modifying Verb: mmv
Number: num
Noun: n
Preposition: prep
Pronoun: pron
Prospective to: pro-to
Relative Pronoun: rel-p
Verb Be Did Form: vbeDdF
Verb Be Do Form: vbeDF
Verb Be Do-ing Form: vbeD-ing
Verb Be Done Form: vbeDnF

2 Coursebook Grammar

Active and Passive [*incl. Causative (have and get) Passive*]; Adjectives [*incl. Order of Adjectives; Comparatives and Superlatives; Gradeable and Ungradable Adjectives*]; Adverbs [*of Time; Frequency; Manner*]; Binomials; Conditionals [*0, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Mixed*]; Contractions; Determiners; Modal Verbs; Negation; Nouns [*incl. Concrete and Abstract; Countable and Uncountable; Determiners (an, an, the etc.)*]; Phrasal Verbs; Prepositions [*of Place; Direction/Movement; Time; Dependent Prepositions*]; Pronouns; Questions [incl. Forming Questions; Indirect Questions; Subject Questions; Question Tags/Tag Questions]; Sentence Structure [*incl. Simple Sentences; Compound Sentences; Complex Sentences; Cleft Sentences; Fronting; Inversion*]; Relative Clauses; Reported Speech [*incl. Reported Questions*]; Tenses; Verbs; Verb Patterns; Word Classes; Wishes and Regrets; Word Formation.

2.1 Coursebook Grammar

Coursebook grammars present a large number of grammar points to their learners and in this part of the book we will look at the main areas of that grammar. This grammar is usually presented as information about the form together with *rules of use*.

You can use this part of the book to check your knowledge of traditional English grammar and as a aide-mémoire. It is organized alphabetically by main topic, as listed above. If you feel confident enough in your understanding of coursebook grammar you can skip this chapter.

2.2 Active and Passive

Sentences are either active or passive.

(2.2.1) Active: The police arrested me yesterday.

(2.2.2) Passive: I was arrested by the police yesterday.

Passive sentences are mostly formed using the verb *to be + past participle/Third Form*. They move the focus from the *subject* of the active sentence to the *object* of that sentence. From: *The police* to *I*.

The *by + agent* [e.g. *by the police*] is often omitted in passive sentences when it is clear who the agent is, or when the agent is not important or unknown.

Some coursebooks ask the learner to transform active sentences into passive ones and vice versa on the basis of Figure 2.1 below.

Causative [Have and Get] Passive

This pseudo-passive lacks the verb *to be*. Compare:

(2.2.3) I cut my own hair. [Active: I do it myself]

(2.2.4) I have my hair cut every month. [Passive: Someone else does it for me]

(2.2.5) I need to repair the roof. [Active: I will do it myself]

(2.2.6) We need to get/have the roof repaired. [Passive: repaired by someone else]

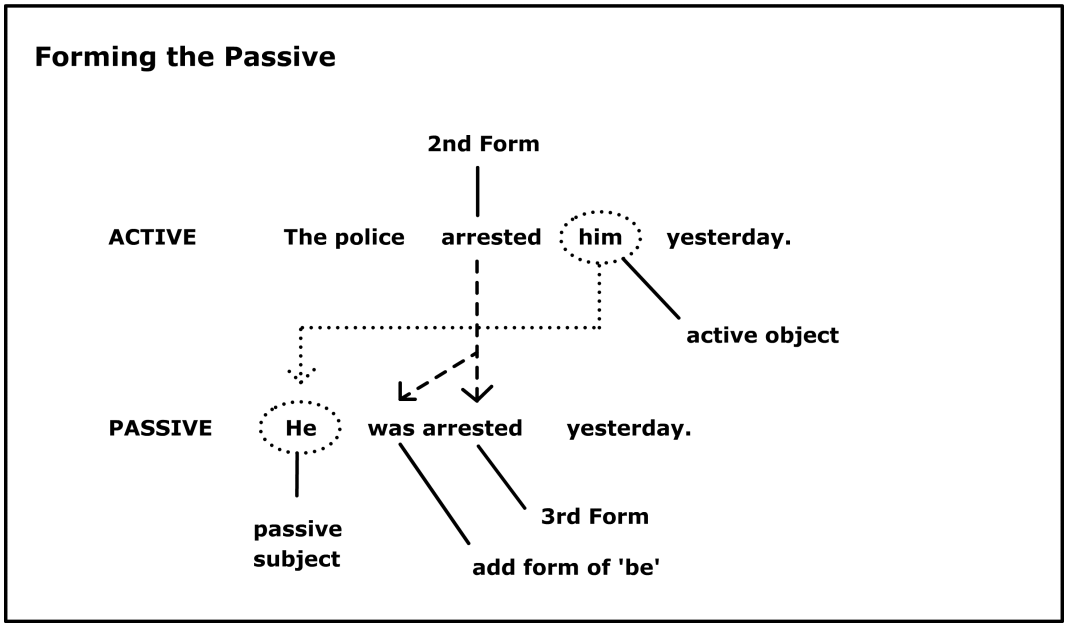


Figure 2.1: Forming the Passive

2.3 Adjectives

Adjectives are words like *beautiful* and *cold*. They are used to describe nouns. There is a generally established order of adjectives used before a noun. Unlike the example in Figure 2.2, usually not so many adjectives are used in a sequence before a noun.

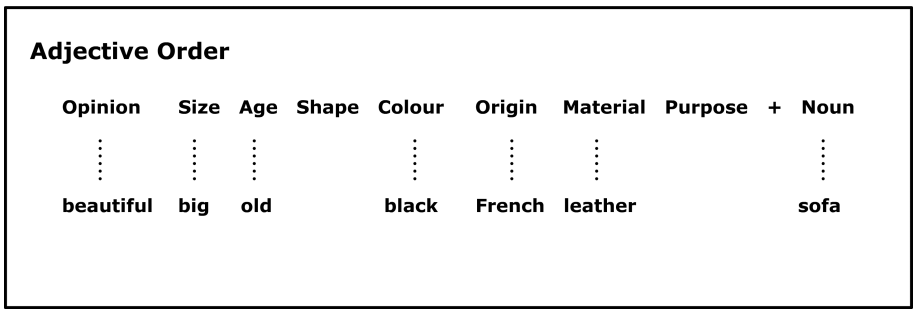


Figure 2.2: Adjective Order

In speech, adjectives can come before and after the noun.

(2.3.1) She was a beautiful woman; tall and elegant.

Comparatives and Superlatives

Adjectives can be used to compare things and say what the extreme example of the class is.

(2.3.2) That's the biggest tiger I've ever seen.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
old	older	the oldest
dirty	dirtier	the dirtiest
beautiful	more beautiful	the most beautiful
good	better	the best
bad	worse	the worst

Table 2.1: Comparatives and Superlatives

Gradable and Ungradable adjectives

Some adjectives are gradable – they can be made weaker [less] or stronger [more]: see Table 2.2.

less		more
quite hot	hot	*very* hot
quite nice	nice	*very* nice

Table 2.2: Gradeable Adjectives

Some adjectives cannot be modified in this way. These are ungradable or limit/extreme adjectives e.g. *boiling, enormous*. We can make these stronger [but not weaker] by adding an intensifying adverb e.g. *absolutely*: *absolutely enormous*. We cannot say *very enormous* as *enormous* already means *very big*.

2.4 Adverbs

Adverbs are words like *slowly* and *fairly*.

Adverbs of Time

Point in time: *now, then, today, tomorrow, tonight, yesterday etc.*

Period of frequency: *annually, daily, fortnightly, hourly, monthly, nightly, quarterly, weekly, yearly etc.*

Adverbs of Frequency

Adverbs of frequency tell us how often.

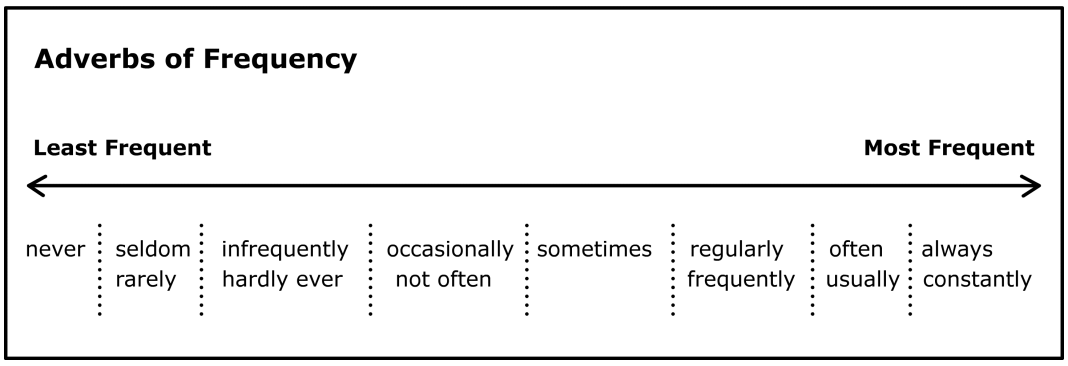


Figure 2.3: Adverbs of Frequency

Adverbs of Manner

Adverbs of manner tell us how an action is done. Often these adverbs can be made from adjectives [see Table 2.3]. Some adverbs are used to modify gradable adjectives: e.g. *slightly, fairly, rather, pretty, quite, very, really, incredibly, extremely + intelligent*.

adjective	adverb
bad	badly
beautiful	beautifully
slow	slowly
quick	quickly

Table 2.3: Adjective - Adverb

2.5 Auxiliary Verbs

There are two kinds of auxiliary verb: primary and modal auxiliary verbs.

The three primary auxiliary verbs are: *be*, *do* and *have*. These are used to make questions, e.g. *Do you like ice-cream*? [see Questions], and verb forms with aspects, e.g. present continuous and present perfect [see Tenses].

The modal auxiliary verbs are: *may*, *might*, *will*, *would*, *can*, *could*, *shall*, *should* and *must* [see Modal Auxiliary Verbs].

2.6 Binomials

Some coursebooks present three word idiomatic expressions with *and* or *or* e.g. *black and white*; *knife and fork*; *do or die*. The word order in such expressions is fixed. While these might be considered to be lexical items I am including them here for a reason as you will see later.

2.7 Conditionals

Zero

The Zero Conditional [*if + present simple, present simple*] is used to talk about conditions which are always true:

(2.7.1) If you heat ice, it melts.

If, here, really means *when*.

First

The First Conditional [*if + present simple, will + infinitive without to*] is used to talk about present or future probabilities:

(2.7.2) If it rains, I'll get wet.

This conditional is sometimes referred to as a *real* conditional.

Second

The Second Conditional [*if + past simple, would + infinitive without to*] is used to talk about improbable or unreal conditions and their improbable or unreal results:

(2.7.3) If it rained I would get wet.

Second Conditionals are less probable than First Conditionals. Some are improbable or impossible:

(2.7.4) If I were you, I'd leave now.

An impossible Second Conditional is sometimes known as an *unreal* conditional. Remember:

The form of the second conditional is past, but the meaning is not.

[Longman Wordflo]

Third

The Third Conditional [*if + had + past participle (= past perfect), would + have + past participle*] is used to talk about impossible conditions in the past and their [impossible] result. They are impossible because the past is finished and cannot be changed.

(2.7.5) If I had not come to Riga, I wouldn't have met my future wife.

The reality is I came to Riga and I met my future wife.

The Third Conditional is sometimes referred to as an *unreal past* conditional.

Mixed

Mixed Conditionals [e.g. *if + past perfect, would + be* etc.] are used to talk about an unreal past condition and an impossible present result:

(2.7.6) If I hadn't got this job, I wouldn't be here now.

These are also *unreal* conditionals.

Other rules about conditionals

Learners are often told to '*never use will or would in the if clause.*'

2.8 Contractions

Contractions are shortened forms like:

won't = will not

don't = do not

I'll = I will

I'd = I would or I had

These contractions are the normal unstressed forms. When they are not contracted e.g. *I will* then the verb is normally stressed: I *will* do it.

2.9 Determiners

Determiners indicate the reference of the noun as being specific or general. There are a number of ways of doing this - as outlined below.

The Definite Article

(2.9.1) The moon is not made of cheese.

The is used:

- to refer to something which has already been mentioned: e.g. *I saw a man walking down the street. The man was wearing a trench coat.*
- when both the speaker and listener know what is being talked about: e.g *'Where's the sugar?' 'It's in the cupboard.'*
- when we say which one: e.g. *His car is the blue one.*
- when there is only one: e.g. *the sun, the moon, the world, the Queen*
- before superlatives and ordinal numbers: e.g. *the highest building, the first page, the last chapter*
- with nationalities or other groups: e.g. *the French, the old, the poor*
- with oceans, deserts, mountains, rivers, hotels, pubs, theatres, museums and newspapers etc.: e.g. *the Pacific, the Sahara, the Himalayas, the Thames, the Ritz, the Palace Theatre, the British Museum, the Times, the North Pole* etc.
- with decades, or groups of years: e.g. *The seventies were an awful decade*; *The 21st century has been marked by wars and other conflicts*.

No article is used before:

- countries, towns, cities, streets [except: *the High Street*], languages, magazines, meals etc.: e.g. *France, Luton, London, Kings Cross Station, George Street, French, Cosmopolitan, dinner*.
- Some places: e.g. *home, school, university, hospital*
- Some forms of transport: e.g. *by car, by bus, by plane, by train*
- Plural and uncountable nouns meaning the thing in general: e.g. *Love is in the air.*

The Indefinite Article

(2.9.2) A man robbed a bank yesterday.

(2.9.3) I've had an idea.

A [*an*] is used:

- when we mention something for the first time: e.g. *I saw a man walking down the street.*
- in front of jobs and professions: e.g. *I'm an engineer.*
- with some expressions: e.g. *What a fantastic day! What a shame! She's such a beautiful girl.*
- with some numbers: e.g. *a hundred, a thousand*
- with some expressions of quantity: e.g. *a few, a little, a pair of, a set of, a couple of*

The use of *a* or *an* depends on the following sound. With a following vowel *sound*, *an* is used [e.g. *an egg*]. With a following consonant *sound*, *a* is used [e.g. *a dog*].

Demonstratives

Demonstratives mark nouns as close [singular or plural] or distant [singular or plural].

this book; *that* book; *these* books; *those* books

Possessive Adjectives/Determiners

These modify a noun and tell you who the noun '*belongs*' to.

my your his her its our their

(2.9.4) She is *my* best friend.

(2.9.5) That's *our* car.

(2.9.6) *Their* house is over there.

2.10 Modal Auxiliary Verbs

There are nine modal auxiliary verbs ['modals' for short]: *can; could; shall; should; will; would; may; might* and *must*. There are a number of semi-modal verbs e.g. *have to, need to* and *ought to*.

There is no third person singular *–s* for modal auxiliary verbs. They are followed by the *infinitive without to*: *do* not *to do*.

These verbs are used to express a number of ideas/functions and coursebook usually present modals through these ideas/functions.

Certainty and Predictions: will

(2.10.1) She'll be late as usual. [See also: The Future in Tenses]

Possibility and Probability: can, might, should, could

(2.10.2) It might rain later.

(2.10.3) It can happen.

(2.10.4) It could rain later.

(2.10.5) That should work.

Logical Deduction: can't, must

(2.10.6) That must be right.

(2.10.7) That can't be right

Obligation and advice: should, ought to, must and have to

Mild obligation/advice/suggestion [from the speaker]:

(2.10.8) You should do your homework.

Mild obligation/advice/suggestion [external]:

(2.10.9) You ought to be more careful.

Strong obligation [from the speaker]:

(2.10.10) You must do your homework.

Strong obligation [external]:

(2.10.11) You have to work hard to succeed.

Lack of obligation: needn't, don't have to

(2.10.12) You needn't take your shoes off unless you want to.

(2.10.13) You don't have to take your coat off [if you don't want to].

Requests: can, could, will and would

(2.10.14) Can I have a word please?
(2.10.15) Could I have a word please? [More formal]
(2.10.16) Will you post this for me please?
(2.10.17) Would you post this for me please? [More formal]

Offers: can, may, will and shall

(2.10.18) Can I help you?
(2.10.19) May I help you?
(2.10.20) I'll help you.
(2.10.21) Shall I help you?

Ability: can, can't, could, couldn't

(2.10.22) I can swim.
(2.10.23) I can't swim
(2.10.24) I could swim when I was three.
(2.10.25) I couldn't swim until I was five.

Permission: can, can't, may

(2.10.26) May I go now?
(2.10.27) Can I go now?
(2.10.28) You can go now.
(2.10.29) You can't go just yet.
(2.10.30) You may not. [Formal]

Prohibition: must not

(2.10.31) You must not hit your brother.

Compared to: *You don't have to do that* i.e. you have a choice – you can do it if you want to.

Modals of Past Deduction

Modal verbs + perfect infinitives are used to express past deductions.
(2.10.32) He may/might not have killed her. [I'm not sure he killed her]
(2.10.33) He couldn't have killed her. [It is impossible that he killed her]

2.11 Negation

Negation means forming a negative sentence by adding the word *not* after the first auxiliary verb [e.g. *am*] in a sentence. If there is no auxiliary verb, e.g. in the Present Simple and Past Simple, then you need to add one i.e. *do*.

(2.11.1) I am happy.

(2.11.2) I am not happy.

(2.11.3) You are a good person.

(2.11.4) You aren't [are not] a good person.

(2.11.5) I like you.

(2.11.6) I don't [do not] like you.

2.12 Nouns

A noun is a word used for a person, animal, place, thing or abstract idea.

Proper nouns are the names of people and places: e.g. *London, John*. They begin with a capital letter. Common nouns are everything else.

Concrete and Abstract

Concrete nouns are words that represent things one can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste with the senses: e.g. *table, car, perfume, wind, cold* etc. Abstract nouns are things like *love, desire, hate, politics* etc.

Countable and Uncountable

Countable nouns are nouns which we can count e.g. *pens, tables* and *chairs* etc. They can be singular or plural.

Uncountable nouns are things which are difficult or impossible to count [e.g. *sugar, hair, flour*] or impossible to divide as an idea [e.g. *music, art, love, advice, news, electricity, money* etc.]. Some of these can be '*counted*' if they are combined with a phrase like '*a piece of*' [e.g. *a piece of advice/cake/music*]. They are normally thought of as being singular, though there are exceptions: e.g. *the police is/are*; *the government is/are*.

Interrogatives

Interrogatives are words like *whose* and *which*, used to make questions.

(2.12.1) Whose book is this?

(2.12.2) Which one is yours?

Possessive 's

A *'s* is added to the end of a noun to show that that first noun owns or possesses the following noun. Note that in the examples below *that's = that is*; it is not a possessive *'s*.

(2.12.3) [singular noun] That's John's car.

(2.12.4) [plural noun] That's the boys' ball.

(2.12.5) [plural noun] That's my parent's house.

(2.12.6) [plural noun] These are the children's favourite toys.

When the singular noun ends in *s* then you have the choice of adding an *'s* or just an apostrophe:

(2.12.7) That's James's car.

(2.12.8) That's James' car.

Its and it's

it's = it is
(2.12.9) It's a lovely day.
its
(2.12.10) That's a lovely dog. What's its name?

A Few and Few; A Little and Little

A few is used with countable nouns.
(2.12.11) There were a few people on the street.
(2.12.12) Can you give me a few minutes?
Few is used with a negative meaning.
(2.12.13) Few people care about it.
(2.12.14) Few people agree with me.
A little is used with uncountable nouns.
(2.12.15) There's a little milk left.
(2.12.16) I can speak a little Latvian.
Little is used with a negative meaning.
(2.12.17) There's little point in doing that.

Some and Any

Some is used in positive sentences with plural and uncountable nouns.
(2.12.18) I have some books about the Kennedy assassination.
Any is used in questions and negatives with plural and uncountable nouns.
(2.12.19) Do you have any money?
(2.12.20) I don't have any money.

Much and Many

Much is used with uncountable nouns in questions and negative statements.
(2.12.21) I don't have much money left.
(2.12.22) How much money do you have?
Many is used with countable nouns in questions and negative statements.
(2.12.23) I don't have many photos of her.
(2.12.24) How many photos have you taken?

A lot of and lots of

A lot of and *lots of* are used with uncountable nouns and plural countable nouns.
(2.12.25) I ate a lot of mandarins.
(2.12.26) I ate lots of mandarins.
(2.12.27) I bought a lot of new furniture for my new flat.
(2.12.28) Lots of people like him.

There is and There are

There is and *there are* are used to say that something exists. *There is* for singular; *there are* for plural.

(2.12.29) There is a problem here.

(2.12.30) There are five teachers working here.

2.13 Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs are made from a verb + particle/preposition. There are four kinds of phrasal verbs.

Type	Comment	Example
Type 1	No object	The car broke down.
		The plane took off.
Type 2	Separable object	I turned the light off.
		I turned off the light.
		I turned it off.
		*I turned off it.
Type 3	Object but inseparable.	He got over the flu.
		*He got the flu over
		She takes her mother.
Type 4	Three word verbs	I look forward to it.
		I quickly caught up with him.

Table 2.4: Phrasal Verbs

Notes

* marks a non-standard form: considered a mistake in some circles.

Type 2: If the object is a pronoun [e.g. *it*], it always comes between the verb and the particle: *I turned it off* not **I turned off it*.

2.14 Prepositions

The main prepositions taught in coursebooks are:

Prepositions of Place

in the living room

at the shops

on the bed

next to/beside/by the bed

under the table

over the bridge

across the bridge

above the fireplace

below the surface

Prepositions of Direction/Movement

over the bridge
across the bridge
through the forest
to the cinema
into the room
onto the bus
into the car
towards me
from my garden
round/around the corner
up the tree

Prepositions of Time

on Saturday; *on* the weekend [US]
in January; *in* summer; *in* the evening; *in* 2012; *in* a minute
at night; *at* the weekend [GB]; *at* half past nine
since 1965
for ten years
ten years *ago*
before six
five *to* nine
twenty *past* seven
from the tenth *to* the sixteenth
until the 26th
by ten o'clock

Dependent Prepositions

Coursebooks also present dependent prepositions – these are prepositions which follow certain words e.g. depend *on*; think *of/about*; look *at/for*; care *for/about* etc.

2.15 Pronouns

Pronouns are used to replace nouns.
(2.15.1) I left the bag in the car.
(2.15.2) I left it in the car.
The pronoun *it* is used instead of *the bag* in the second example.

Subject Pronouns

I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they
(2.15.3) I love you.
I is the subject of the sentence.

Object Pronouns

me, you, him, her, it, us, you, them

(2.15.4) Do you love me?

You is the subject; *me* is the object.

Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns refer to the preceding noun.

Singular: *myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself*

Plural: *ourselves, yourselves, themselves*

(2.15.5) I hurt myself.

(2.15.6) We enjoyed ourselves.

Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns show ownership.

mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs

(2.15.7) It is mine.

(2.15.8) That's ours.

(2.15.9) It's theirs.

(2.15.10) What's its name?

2.16 Questions

There are a number of different types of question:

- Yes/No questions
- Choice questions
- Wh- or question word questions
- Indirect questions
- Subject questions
- Question tags/tag questions

Yes/No Questions

(2.16.1) Do you like me?

(2.16.2) Are you a teacher?

These are known as yes/no questions because of the response required.

Questions can be made from statements using the auxiliary verb. If there is no auxiliary verb then you have to use a form of *do*. There is a rule (from Leech *et al* 2001) for making yes/no question forms, which, although not from a coursebook, illustrates question formation found in coursebooks:

> (a) Start with the sentence in statement WORD ORDER.
>
> (b) Put the first verb of the verb phrase (if it is an AUXILIARY or a main verb be) in front of the subject [see inversion 1-4].

(c) If the statement has no auxiliary or form of be, add the correct form of do [see DO 2] (the 'empty' auxiliary) before the subject.

(d) Change the falling tone at the end of the statement into a rising tone at the end of the question [see INTONATION].

Forming questions from statements with and without an auxiliary verb can be represented diagrammatically as in Figures 2.4 and 2.5 below.

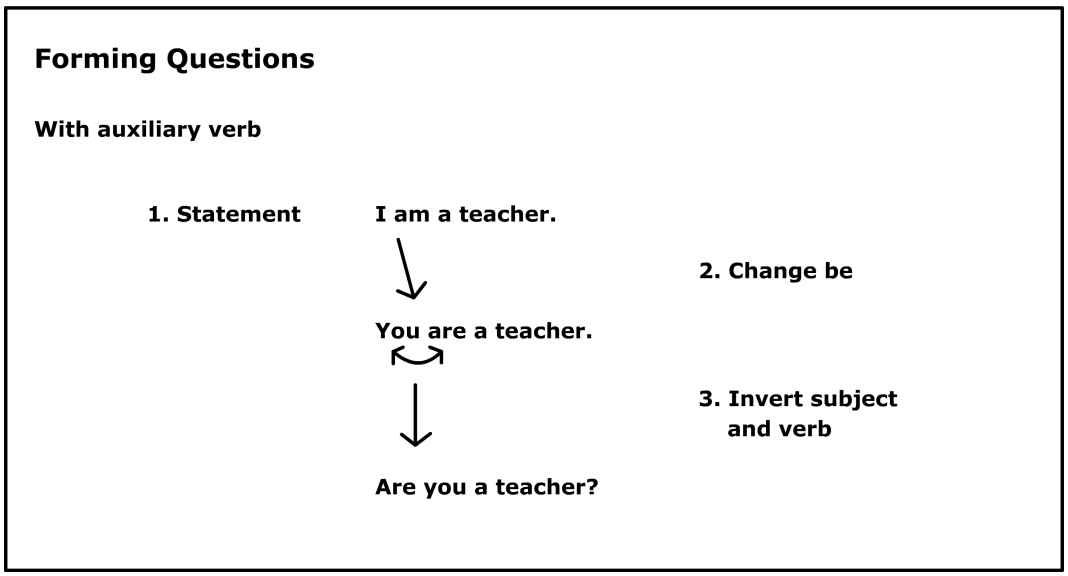


Figure 2.4: Forming Questions 1

Choice Questions

This kind of question gives you a choice.

(2.16.3) Do you prefer chocolate or vanilla ice cream?

Wh- or Question Word Questions

These questions are used to ask for information. They follow the pattern:

Question word + auxiliary verb + subject + main verb

(2.16.4) What is your name?

Question words: *where, when, who[m], why, how, how much*

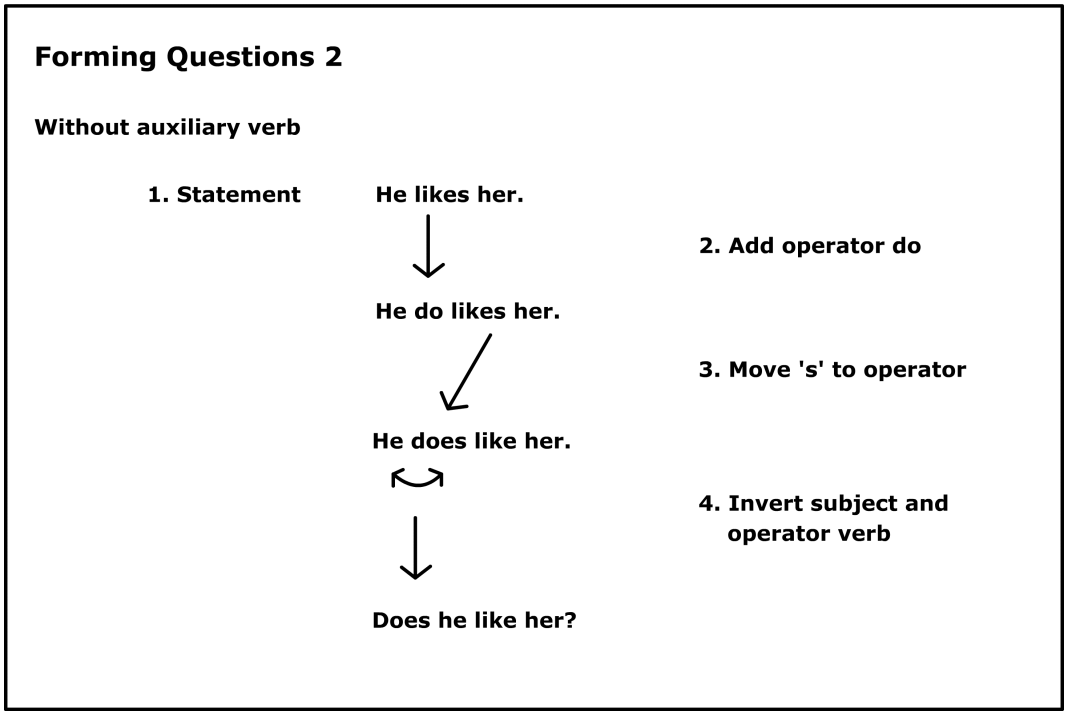


Figure 2.5: Forming Questions 2

Indirect Questions

Indirect questions are made using introductory phrases:

Can you tell me....

Could you tell me....

Would you mind telling me....

These phrases are followed by *about, who, which* etc. or *if*.

The word order after the introductory phrase is *not* inverted like in the questions above.

(2.16.5) Can you tell me when you are leaving?

(2.16.6) Could you tell me if you are happy here?

(2.16.7) Would you mind telling me what time it is?

Subject Questions

In some questions the word order is the same as for statements:

(2.16.8) Who told him?

In these questions the subject of the question and the question word are the same '*who*'.

Question tags/tag questions

Tag questions are added to the end of a statement. They are used to help maintain the flow of conversation and to check things. There are basically two kinds of tag questions.

1. '*Real*' question tag questions with rising intonation on the tag. In these tag questions the speaker is asking for confirmation.

(2.16.9) You do like chocolate ice cream, don't you?

2. '*Agree with me*' tag questions with falling intonation on the tag. In these tag questions the speaker expects the listener to agree with them.

(2.16.10) It's a lovely day, isn't it?

Tag questions generally follow one of the following two patterns:

1. Statement with positive verb, negative tag.
2. Statement with negative verb, positive tag.

The auxiliary verb is repeated in the tag. If there is no auxiliary verb then *do* [or *don't*] is used.

(2.16.11) You've been to Paris before, haven't you?

(2.16.12) You like ice-cream, don't you?

2.17 Sentence Structure

The most common sentence structure in English is *subject + verb + object*:

(2.17.1) I like you.

The pattern *subject + verb + complement* is also common e.g. with the verb *be*:

(2.17.2) He was happy.

Simple Sentences

Simple sentences are one clause sentences:

(2.17.3) I love you.

Compound Sentences

Compound sentences have separate clauses linked by conjunctions e.g. *and, but*.

(2.17.4) I like living here but I wouldn't want to live here forever.

(2.17.5) I went to the cinema with her even though I don't really like her.

Complex Sentences

A complex sentence has one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. Independent clauses make sense on their own. Dependent clauses only make sense with the other clause.

(2.17.6) I liked the book [independent clause] you wrote [dependent clause].

(2.17.7) I had lunch [independent clause] before I came [dependent clause].

Cleft Sentences

Cleft sentences bring information to the front of the sentence to give it more importance or focus.

(2.17.8) [all] All he wanted was a quiet life.

(2.17.9) [it] It was John who caused the accident.

(2.17.10) [what] What he really wanted was a BMW.

Fronting

We can foreground some information in a sentence to make it the topic of the sentence.

(2.17.11) Our website has all the information you need.

(2.17.12) All the information you need is on our website.

(2.17.13) We have already discussed that issue.

(2.17.14) That issue has already been discussed.

Inversion

Inversion of the subject and verb with a negative clause or words like *seldom, never, no sooner* etc. is used to add emphasis.

(2.17.15) Under no circumstances will you ever see her again.

(2.17.16) Little did he know but that was the last time he would ever see her.

(2.17.17) No sooner had he killed one zombie than another appeared.

2.18 Relative Clauses

Defining Relative Clauses

Defining relative clauses explain *who, whose* or *what*. They define the noun.

(2.18.1) The man [who] I saw yesterday was the father of one of my friends.

The relative pronouns – *who, which, that* and *whose* – are used in defining relative clauses. See Figure 2.6.

Non-defining Relative Clauses

Non-defining relative clauses [see Figure 2.7] are used to add extra information about the noun to the sentences. They are not essential to the sentence and are marked by commas. The pronouns – *who, which* and *whose* [not *that*] are used in these clauses.

(2.18.2) My sister has six children.

(2.18.3) My sister, who lives in England, has six children.

When spoken, the commas are represented by pauses:

(2.18.4) My sister [pause] who lives in English [pause] has six children.

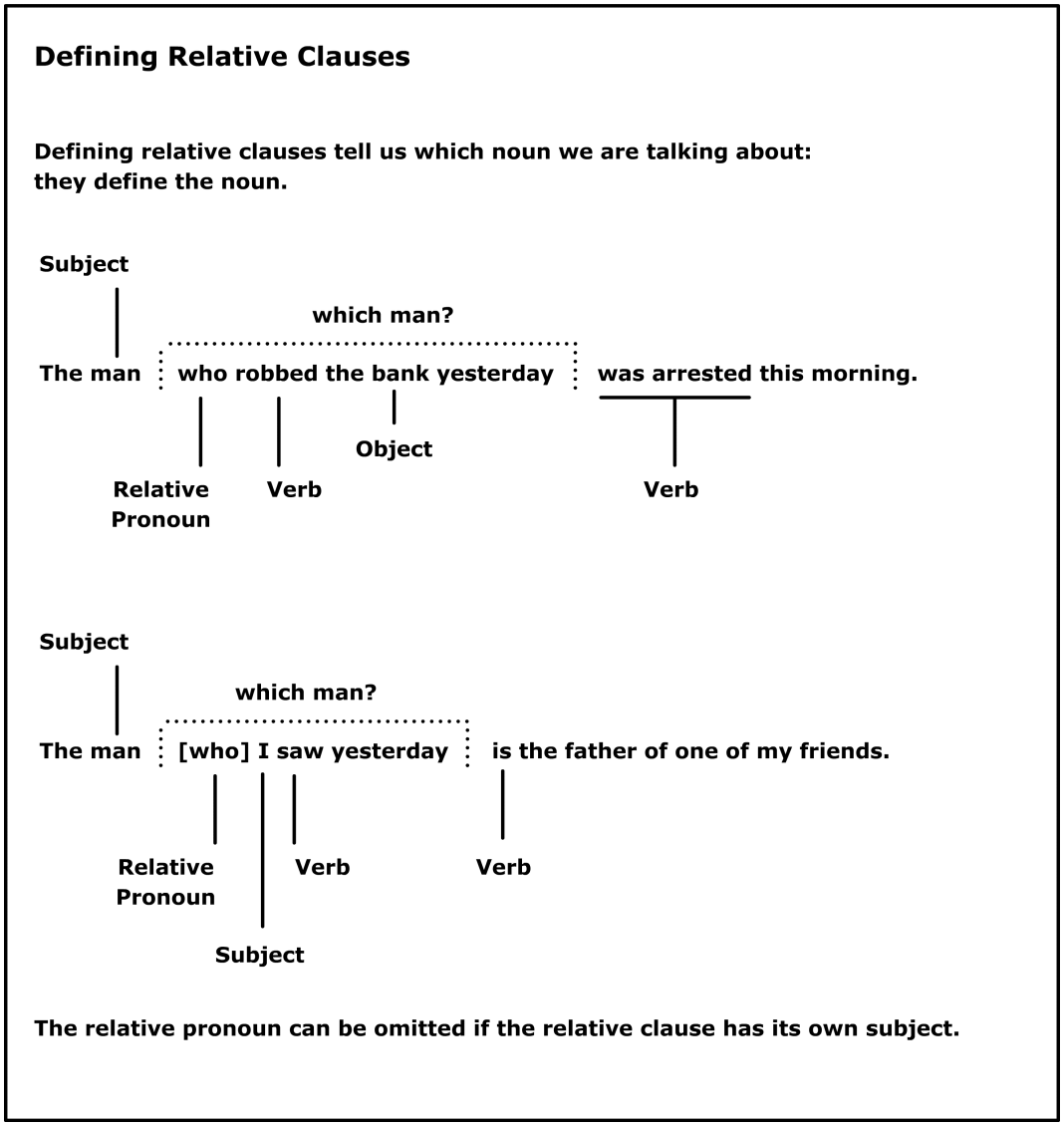


Figure 2.6: Defining Relative Clauses

Defining and Non-Defining Relative Clauses

Compare:

(2.18.5) My sister who lives in England has six children.

This is a defining relative clause: I have more than one sister – I am telling you which one has six children.

(2.18.6) My sister, who lives in England, has six children.

This is a non-defining relative clause: I have only one sister and I am giving you extra information [*she lives in England*] about her.

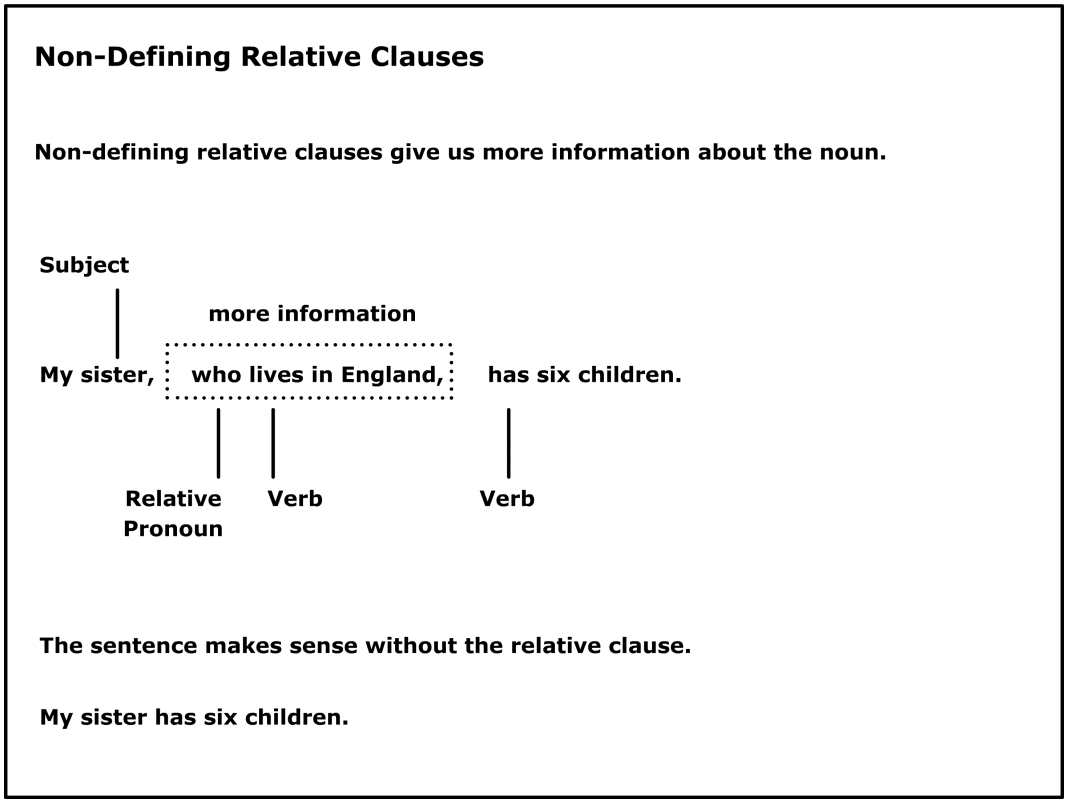


Figure 2.7: Non-Defining Relative Clauses

2.19 Reported Speech

When you want to report what someone has said you usually use a reporting verb in the past tense [e.g. *said, explained, promised, told me, suggested*] and change the tenses of what the person said as well e.g. from the Past Simple to the Past Perfect. This change of tense is sometimes called *going one step back* [*into the past*].

(2.19.1) "I love you"

(2.19.2) She said she loved me.

(2.19.3) "I'm too busy to help."

(2.19.4) He said he was too busy to help.

(2.19.5) "I've been to New York three times."

(2.19.6) She said she'd been to New York three times.

(2.19.7) "I didn't go to the party."

(2.19.8) He said he hadn't been to the party.

(2.19.9) "I'll go there later."

(2.19.10) She said she'd go there later. ['d = would]

(2.19.11) "I can do it on Saturday."

(2.19.12) He said he could do it on Saturday.

The time and place words may also need to be changed.

(2.19.13) "I'll be there tomorrow."

(2.19.14) He said he'd be there tomorrow. [tomorrow is still tomorrow]

(2.19.15) He said he'd be there the day after. [tomorrow is past]

Some coursebooks note that the verbs do not *always* have to change in this sequence of tenses. This is true when the reported idea is still true or still future.

(2.19.16) "I love you."

(2.19.17) She said/says she loves me.

(2.19.18) "The train leaves in ten minutes."

(2.19.19) He said/says the train leaves in ten minutes.

Reported Questions

Reported questions are reported in the same way as reported statements. In some reported questions the auxiliary verbs are omitted. The word order is the same as statements – not like a question. In yes/no questions *do* changes to *if*.

(2.19.20) "Why do you like her?"

(2.19.21) He asked me why I liked her.

(2.19.22) "Do you like her?"

(2.19.23) He asked me if I liked her.

(2.19.24) "What time is it?"

(2.19.25) She asked me what time it was.

(2.19.26) "Where did he go?"

(2.19.27) She asked me where he had gone.

2.20 Tenses

Some grammar books make a distinction between tense and aspect. In this view there are two tenses – past and present - and two aspects: the continuous/progressive aspect [represented by the present participle: e.g. *walking*] and the perfect aspect [represented by the past participle: e.g. *gone*]. Most coursebooks do not make such a distinction and present the various combinations of tense and aspects as separate '*tenses*'. This means there are at least 12 active tenses, maybe more depending on what you include. Below are the *active tenses* presented in most coursebooks.

The Present

Present Simple

The present simple is used:

to talk about repeated events like habits:

(2.20.1) He smokes 20 cigarettes a day.

to talk about a fact which is always true:

(2.20.2) The earth goes around the sun.

to talk about states:

(2.20.3) I work here.

to tell jokes [*the historical present*]:

(2.20.4) A man walks into a bar. . . .

to talk about future timetabled events:

(2.20.5) The train leaves at 5.10.

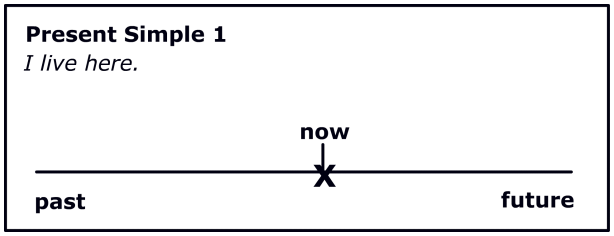


Figure 2.8: Timeline: The Present Simple 1

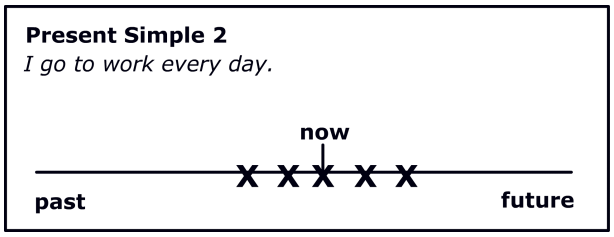


Figure 2.9: Timeline: The Present Simple 2

Present Continuous/Progressive

The present continuous/progressive [*be + present participle/-ing*] is used:
to talk about activities happening now:
(2.20.6) I'm watching TV.
to talk about an activity happening around now but not always exactly now:
(2.20.7) I'm reading a good book at the moment.
to talk about a temporary activity:
(2.20.8) I'm staying in a hotel while I'm looking for a flat.
to talk about a future arrangement:
(2.20.9) I'm meeting John at six.
to talk about an annoying habit:
(2.20.10) She's always biting her nails.

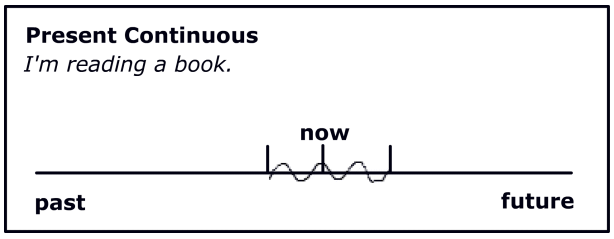


Figure 2.10: Timeline: The Present Continuous

Present Perfect Simple

The present perfect simple [*have + past participle/Third Form*] is used:
to talk about an event which did or didn't happen in the time period up to now. The exact time of the event is not important:

(2.20.11) I've been to Paris.

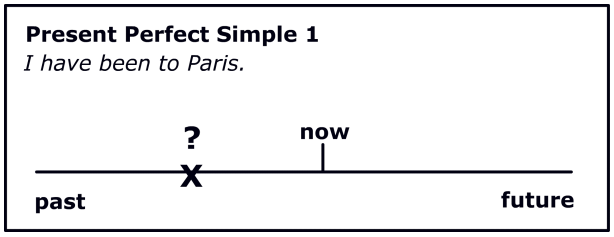


Figure 2.11: Timeline: The Present Perfect Simple 1

to talk about something that started in the past and continues up to now. For and since are often used:
(2.20.12) I have lived here for five years.

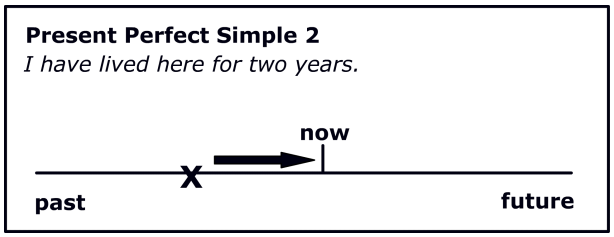


Figure 2.12: Timeline: The Present Perfect Simple 2

to talk about something which happened in the recent past and has present relevance or importance:
(2.20.13) I've just finished.

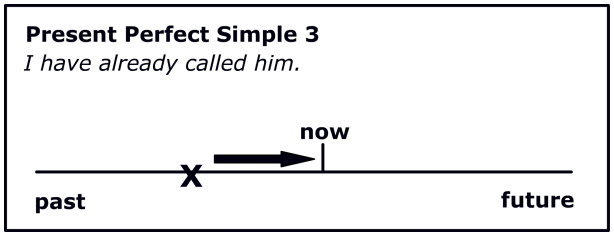


Figure 2.13: Timeline: The Present Perfect Simple 3

Present Perfect Continuous/ Progressive

The present perfect continuous/progressive [*have + been + present participle/-ing*] is used:
to talk about actions or states happening in the period of time up to the present:
(2.20.14) I've been living here for three years.
to talk about a past activity [finished or unfinished] with a present result:
(2.20.15) I've been painting the bedroom.
The present perfect simple is more focused on the completion of the activity. In contrast the present perfect continuous emphasizes the continuation of the activity.

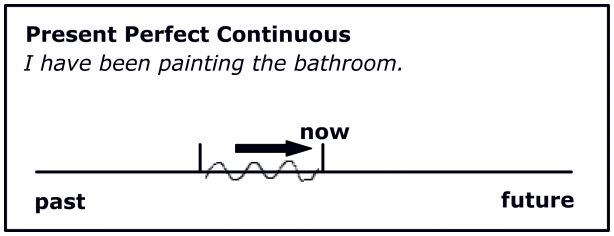


Figure 2.14: Timeline: The Present Perfect Continuous

Be used to

Be used to is an expression, not a tense, used to say we are familiar with something e.g. a state or activity.
(2.20.16) I'm used to getting up at six.

The Past

Past Simple

The past simple is used:
to talk about finished actions in the past:
(2.20.17) I left home at 7 this morning.
to talk about a set of actions in a story:
(2.20.18) He met her in 1960 and they dated for four years before they finally separated.
to talk about past states or habits:
(2.20.19) When I was younger I had a pet rabbit.
(2.20.20) He walked to work every day for ten years.

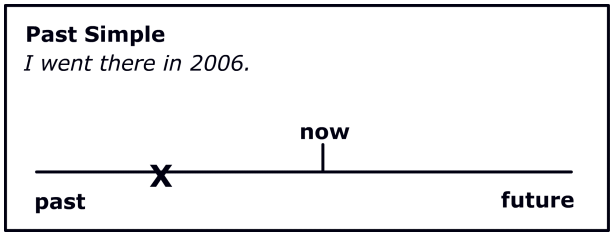


Figure 2.15: Timeline: The Past Simple

Past Continuous/Progressive

The past continuous [*past be + present participle/-ing*] is used:
to say that something was in progress at a certain time in the past:
(2.20.21) When I was coming to work last week I saw a train crash.
to describe something in the past:
(2.20.22) The sun was shining brightly as I reached the beach.
to describe an annoying habit in the past:
(2.20.23) He was always asking me silly questions.

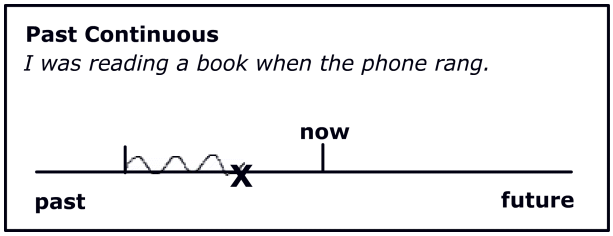


Figure 2.16: Timeline: The Past Continuous

Future in the past

Future in the past is expressed using *would* or *was/were going to*.

(2.20.24) No-one realized he would go on to become president.

(2.20.25) I didn't know you were going to the cinema.

Used to

Used to is used to talk about a habit or state which happened in the past but does not happen now:

(2.20.26) I used to live in Paris. [But I don't now.]

Would

Would is used like *used to* to talk about past habits but *not* states:

(2.20.27) He would go for a walk every morning before breakfast.

Past Perfect Simple

The past perfect simple [*had + past participle/Third Form*] is used to show that an event occurred before another event in the past.

(2.20.28) I had met him twice before I managed to interview him.

Sometimes the sequence of events is clear so the past perfect is optional or not necessary.

(2.20.29) Before I left I closed all the windows.

When the past perfect is not exactly necessary it might be used for stylistic reasons or to make the sequence absolutely unambiguous.

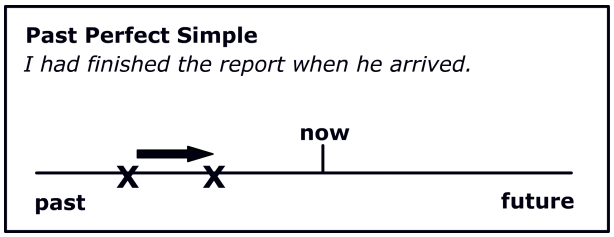


Figure 2.17: Timeline: The Past Perfect

Past Perfect Continuous/Progressive

The past perfect continuous [*had + been +present participle/-ing*] is used to talk about an earlier situation or action which continued up to the time event you are focused on in the past:

(2.20.30) We'd been partying for ages before the neighbours complained.

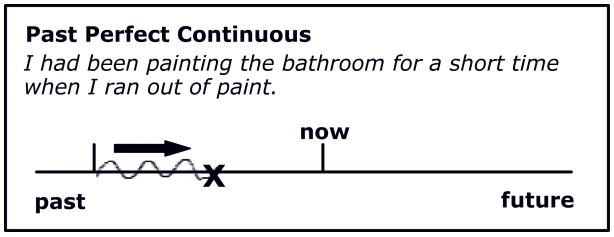


Figure 2.18: Timeline: The Past Perfect Continuous

The Future

Future Simple

The future simple [*will + base form/infinitive*] is used:

to talk about future facts:

(2.20.31) I'll be ten in two weeks.

to talk about predictions:

(2.20.32) I'll see you later.

to talk about decisions/offers etc. made at the time of speaking:

(2.20.33) I'll get that for you.

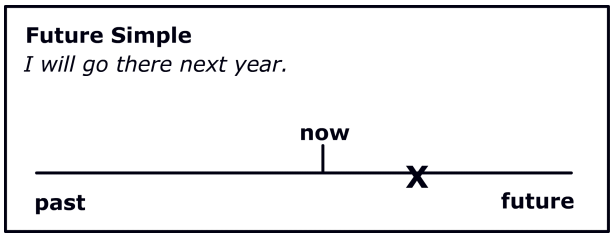


Figure 2.19: Timeline: The Future Simple

Future Continuous/Progressive

The future continuous [*will+ be + present participle/-ing*] is used to say that something will be in progress at a certain time in the future:

(2.20.34) I'll be sitting on the beach drinking rum and coke this time next week.

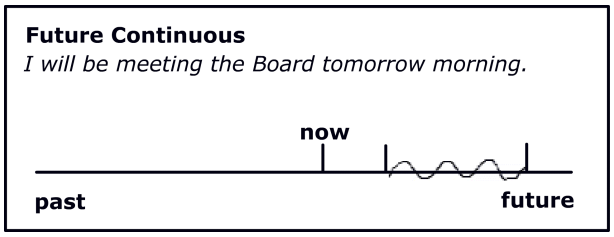


Figure 2.20: Timeline: The Future Continuous

Future Perfect Simple

The future perfect simple [*will + have + past participle/Third Form*] is used to talk about something planned to happen or expected to happen before another action or by a certain time in the future.

(2.20.35) By the end of the year, I'll have read all his books.

(2.20.36) I'll have finished by the time you are ready.

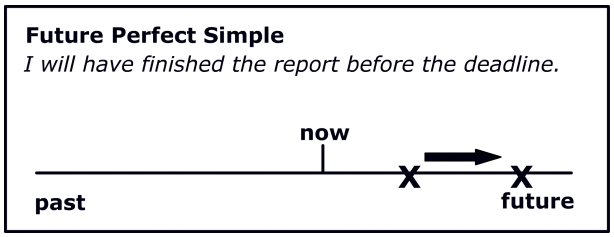


Figure 2.21: Timeline: The Future Perfect Simple

Future Perfect Continuous/Progressive

The future perfect continuous/progressive [*will + have + been + present participle/-ing*] is used to talk about something expected or planned to be in progress before another action or by a certain time in the future.

(2.20.37) He'll have been working here for five years by the end of the semester.

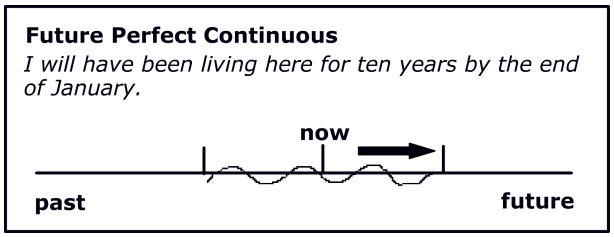


Figure 2.22: Timeline: The Future Perfect Continuous

Going to future

The *going to* future is used to talk about plans which are based on evidence e.g. present facts:

(2.20.38) It's going to rain soon. [I can see the clouds]

Present Simple

The present simple is used to talk about future timetabled events:

(2.20.39) The train leaves at 5.10.

Present Continuous/Progressive

The present continuous [*be + present participle/-ing*] is used to talk about a future arrangement:

(2.20.40) I'm meeting John at six.

2.21 Verbs

Verbs tell us about an action, an event or a state.

- State verbs, e.g. *believe, remember, love, want, hear, smell, own, cost etc.*, are usually only used in simple forms [e.g. present simple, present perfect simple, past simple, past perfect simple, future simple etc.]. These verbs are not about activities.
- Dynamic verbs e.g. *walk, attempt* etc. can be used in simple, continuous and perfect forms.

Verb Forms

These are the forms of the verb:

Form		
Infinitive/Base Form	be	walk
To Infinitive	to be	to walk
Simple Present/First Form [1st person singular]	am	walk
Simple Past/Second Form [1st person singular]	was	walked
Past Participle/Third Form	been	walked
Present Participle/ –ing form	being	walking

Table 2.5: Forms of the Verb

Most verbs have the same infinitive, base form and simple present first person singular form.

Be

Be is the most complicated verb. It has an non-inflected infinitive form [*be*]; the present participle is *being*; the past participle/third form is *been*; and it is inflected for person in the present and past.

Person	Present	Past
I	am	was
he/she/it	is	was
you	are	were
we	are	were
they	are	were

Table 2.6: Be

Regular and Irregular Verbs

Verbs are either regular or irregular.

Regular Verb Examples

The regular 2nd and Third Form verbs end in three different sounds as shown in the table but this sound can change in connected speech.

Form	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
First Form	walk	want	desire
Second Form	walked	wanted	desired
Third Form	walked	wanted	desired
Final Sound	/t/	/id/	/d/

Table 2.7: Regular Verbs

Irregular Verb Examples

Form	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3	Example 4
First Form	go	teach	have	see
Second Form	went	taught	had	saw
Third Form	gone	taught	had	seen

Table 2.8: Irregular Verbs

Third Person s

Verbs are marked for person with the *third person s* in the Present Simple form.
(2.21.1) He likes ice-cream.

2.22 Verb Patterns

Some verbs are followed by *–ing forms*.
(2.22.1) I like fishing.
(2.22.2) I enjoy reading.
(2.22.3) I don't mind helping you.
Some verbs are followed by *to infinitives*.
(2.22.4) I've decided to leave.
(2.22.5) I want to go now.
(2.22.6) I have to go now.
(2.22.7) I'd love to go to the cinema.
Some verbs are followed by *–ing* or *to infinitives* with little or no difference in meaning.
(2.22.8) I like swimming in the morning.
(2.22.9) I like to swim in the morning.
Some verbs are followed by *–ing* or *to infinitives* with a *change* in meaning.
(2.22.10) I remember locking the door. [Past]
(2.22.11) I must remember to lock the door. [In the future]
(2.22.12) I tried to open the window.
But I couldn't open it.
(2.22.13) I tried opening the window but the smell didn't go away.
Opening the window did not help to get rid of the smell.
(2.22.14) I stopped to talk.
I stopped doing one thing so I could talk.

(2.22.15) I stopped talking. [Silence]

The *–ing form* is used after prepositions.

(2.22.16) I'm afraid of crashing the car.

(2.22.17) I'm good at shooting.

(2.22.18) I'm thinking of emigrating.

2.23 Word Classes

There are eight classes of words: *adjectives* [e.g. *big, creative*]; *adverbs* [e.g. *quickly, interestingly*]; *nouns* [e.g. *city; London*]; *verbs* [e.g. *walk, think*]; *prepositions* [e.g. *on, in*]; *determiners* [e.g. *a, the*]; *pronouns* [e.g. *she*] and *conjunctions* [e.g. *and, but*].

2.24 Wishes and Regrets: Wish and If only

Wish + past simple is used to express regret about something in the present:

(2.24.1) I wish I knew her.

I do not know her but I want to

Wish + past perfect or *regret + -ing* is used to express regret about something in the past:

(2.24.2) I wish I hadn't gone to university.

I went to university and I regret it.

(2.24.3) I regret going to university.

I went to university and I regret it.

If only is used in the same way:

(2.24.4) If only I hadn't gone to university.

(2.24.5) If only I knew her.

2.25 Word Building

Words have a root and derivatives. These form word families:

e.g. *operate [root], operation, operational, operator, operative, inoperative*.

Prefixes and Suffixes

The figures below shows some common prefixes, their meaning and how they are used to form words, and some ways word forms can be made by adding suffixes.

Prefixes.

Word Building: Prefixes

anti	against	**anti-war, anti-British**
auto	by oneself	**automatic, autograph**
bi	two	**bi-lingual, bicyle**
co	together	**co-exist, co-operate**
dis	negative, opposite	**disappoint, disappear**
ex	former, out of	**ex-president, extract**
in/im	negative, [very]	**inconvenient, impatient, [invaluable]**
micro	small	**microscope**
mini	small	**mini-skirt**
mis	badly	**misunderstood, misaligned**
mono	one	**monologue, monochrome**
multi	many	**multi-functional**
over	too much	**overvalued**
post	after	**postwar, postgraduate,**
pre	before	**pre-dawn**
pro	for	**pro-government, pro-war**
re	again, take back	**re-do, re-read, retract**
semi	half	**semi-conscious, semi-detached**
sub	under, less than	**submarine, sub-standard**
un	negative	**undo, uncomfortable**
under	not enough	**underpaid, underwhelmed**

Figure 2.23: Word Building: Prefixes

Suffixes.

Word Building: Suffixes

noun to adjective:	+	**-ly**	friend	**friendly**
		-y	cloud	**cloudy**
		-ous	danger	**dangerous**
		-al	fiction	**fictional**
		-ic	icon	**iconic**
		-ed	talent	**talented**
		-ish	child	**childish**
adjective to adverb:	+	**-ly**	recent	**recently**
			slow	**slowly**
verb to adjective:	+	**-ive**	create	**creative**
		-ent/ant	rely	**reliant**
		-able/ible	rely	**reliable**
adjective to verb:	+	**-ise**	special	**specialise**
		-en	wide	**widen**
		-ify	simple	**simplify**
verb to noun	+	**-y**	recover	**recovery**
		-ment	excite	**excitement**
		-ance	perform	**performance**
		-ion	divide	**division**
		-al	deny	**denial**
		-er/-or/-r	teach	**teacher**
			advise	**adviser/advisor**
		-ery/-ry	bribe	**bribery**

Figure 2.24: Word Building: Suffixes

3 Challenges

Much of English grammar is uncontroversial, like the treatment of prepositions, but some of it, mainly verbs, can be viewed differently. Various writers have challenged parts of coursebook grammar and in this part we will briefly look at some of these challenges.

3.1 Used to

The rule of use of *used to* is often paraphrased as about '*something which happened in the past but does not happen now*'. This is, unfortunately, only true of the examples chosen by the coursebook writers who make this claim and this idea is often made clear in those examples by the addition of a further clause '*but I don't now.*' The examples fit the '*rule*'. The '*rule*' does not fit all possible examples. It is easy to create an example where *used to* only tells us about the past and nothing about the present. Compare:

Coursebook Type Example

I used to smoke [*but I don't now*].

Challenge Example

I used to live here when I was a boy; I'm glad to be living here again.

Used to tells us about the past – not the present.

3.2 Some and Any

The simplistic rule of use '*some for positive statements, any for negatives and questions*' is easily shown to be false with these examples.

Challenge Example 1

I like any kind of modern music.

Challenge Example 2

Could I have some more please?

Some coursebooks now add '*some is used for requests*', which, considering that a request is a kind of question, muddies the water a bit.

3.3 Few and A Few

Similarly, the rule of use distinction between *a few* [positive] and *few* [negative] can also be shown to be misleading.

Challenge Example 1

Few people come here in the winter. It's great: peace and quiet.

Challenge Example 2

A few people came. It was very disappointing: we'd expected more.

On the scale of quantity *a few* is more than *few* but still not many. The idea of *positive* and *negative* confuses the issue.

3.4 Present Continuous for Annoying Habits

One use of the present continuous presented in coursebooks is to express annoying habits. This is true in the examples written by coursebook writers. It's less true in other examples.

Coursebook Type Example

She's always biting her nails.

This is generally accepted to be annoying.

Challenge Example

He's always buying me flowers or chocolates or expensive trinkets. It's so sweet.

This is not so annoying I believe.

3.5 A, An and The

Yet another imprecise rule of use is the formulation of '*use 'a/an' for the first mention, and 'the' for the second*'.

Coursebook Type Example

I saw a man walking down the street. The man was wearing a trench coat.

It is much more likely that the noun phrase '*a man*' will be replaced with a pronoun in the second sentence.

Challenge Example

I saw a man walking down the street. He was wearing a trench coat.

This is much more natural English.

Similarly, because, presumably, she follows this rule, my eldest son's English teacher has twice '*corrected*' sentences of this type:

Alexander's sentence: *The blue whale is the world's largest animal.*

Teacher's correction: *A blue whale is the world's largest animal.*

This '*use 'a/an' for the first mention, and 'the' for the second*' type of rule is what I call a *short cut rule*. Short cuts are taken to get somewhere faster and to avoid things like muggers and your boss walking down the street towards you. Language short cut rules like this avoid engagement with meaning. Rules such as these, which lead to error, are just bad rules.

3.6 Countable and Uncountable

Some nouns are considered to be countable, others uncountable. This is not as clear cut as coursebook grammar writers would like us to think.

Example 1: House

Coursebook Type Examples

He's bought a house.

She owns many houses.

Houses are seen here as things which you can count as individual units. However:

Challenge Example

They bought too much house and now are having trouble paying off their mortgage.

Their house is too large and too expensive. This idea of *house* is not an individual unit which you can count.

Example 2: Work

Coursebook Type Example

I have too much work to do.

This work cannot be counted as an individual unit.

Challenge Examples

She owns many works by Picasso.

This is a fine piece of work.

Works = paintings/sketches by an artist: therefore you can count them as individual items.

Example 3: Chair

Coursebook Example

There are two chairs in the picture.

These chairs can be counted as an individual units.

Challenge Example

Could I have some chair please?

When there is only one chair and you have to share then you can ask for some of the chair.

The three examples explored above show that it is what the user of the language means by the noun that is important - not whether the grammar book or dictionary says that a noun is countable or uncountable.

3.7 Weaknesses in Rules

There seems to be '*weaknesses*' in some of the rules of use in coursebooks. They basically lack precision or are misleading and do not reflect the reality of the language. It is relatively easy to tweak such rules to make them better as one could do in the examples above but there are more serious problems with coursebook grammar and we will now look at the most serious – the problems of verbs and tense.

3.8 Verbs

Teachers spend an enormous amount of time teaching verbs but there are a number of issues with the traditional description of verbs.

Stative and Dynamic Verbs

Some stative verbs [used in simple forms] are only stative verbs until they are not. Compare:

Coursebook Type Example

I love it.

Challenge Examples

I'm loving it.

Loving the diagram.

[Elided '*I'm loving that diagram.*'?]

Coursebook Type Example

I think that's right.

Challenge Examples

I'm thinking about it.

As I'm listening to this, I'm thinking that...

[Presenter on BBC World Service '*Have Your Say*' 8.12.11]

Then there are also cases when *–ing forms* are used, not in the present continuous or past continuous etc., but as *participles*:

Challenge Examples

Liking him she opened the door and looked out.

[From Hemingway: *Cat in the rain*]

Knowing me, knowing you (ah-hah)

[ABBA]

How useful is it for learners to learn that verbs like *love* are stative verbs when often they are not? Not very. Labelling verbs as stative or dynamic represents a partial view of the verbs and to make sense the labelling would have to be supported with a long explanation of the meaning of the terms *stative* and *dynamic*, and a list of caveats and exceptions and hedges: when does the label apply and when does it not? In reality some verbs have stative meanings *and* dynamic meanings. The *–ing form* of the verb has a meaning. It is much more productive to consider - what is that meaning? And then: when do I use it?

3.9 Tenses

We have present tenses [labelled as *present*], past tenses [labelled as *past*] and future tenses [labelled as *future*]. This makes a neat little paradigm to match the ideas of past, present and future through which we conceive the march of time in English. This neatness hides some inconvenient facts like, for example, that so-called *past tenses* can be used in the present. How can that be?

The Past in The Present

Challenge Example 1

In a shop

Assistant: *Can I help you?*

Customer: *I was wondering about that jacket.*

[*was wondering* = past continuous]

The customer is being non-committal: not showing too much interest in the jacket.

Challenge Example 2

Two friends talking

Alex: *What are you up to this weekend?*

Harry: *I was thinking about going to the cinema. Do you want to come?*

[*was thinking* = past continuous]

Harry has not finally decided about going to the cinema. He is not committed to the action and he is signalling he is open to a change of plan, or being joined by Alex and then committing to the event. He could have, of course, said '*I am thinking about going to the cinema.*' and thus showing more enthusiasm for the idea.

Challenge Example 3

[The second conditional]

If I had a car I could drive there.

[*had* = past simple, *would* = past of *will*]

This statement not about the past but about an alternative reality compared to the real present situation: *I don't have a car; I can't drive.*

Remember the rule from Part Two? '*The form of the second conditional is past, but the meaning is not.*' [Longman Wordflo]. Using this rule [presumably the rules are meant to be used?] involves mental gymnastics – I have to *use past forms* but the meaning is *not* past. This is a use of the *past subjunctive* [identical in form to the simple past], which is used to talk about a mood - not a time. Modern coursebooks avoid terms like the subjunctive.

In all three challenge examples '*past*' forms are used, perfectly naturally, in the present to talk about the present. These are usually considered to be exceptions to the general use of past verb forms to refer to the past. Yet, if you teach past forms as '*past forms*' then you are storing up trouble for the future. Learners will learn these forms as *past* forms and will avoid using them to express ideas in the present and will have difficulty in understanding people when they use these forms in the present. Learners are under the impression that there is a simple correlation between past time and what has been labelled as the Past Simple but, as we know, there is not a one-to-one correlation between past forms and past use. This is a fundamental weakness in the standard grammatical description of English and one which any re-imagining of the system will have to address. Can we describe verbs in a way which avoids the confusion of, for example, the *past label* and '*past form*' use in the present? Do we need the subjunctive?

The Future

In the traditional description itself we can see both the *Present* Simple and *Present* Continuous/Progressive used for *future* time: an explicit admission that the past, present, future paradigm is fundamentally flawed. Similarly, *will* is often taught and learned as '*the future*' when it is presented as the '*future simple*'. Unfortunately for the traditional description, *will* can also be used to refer to things in the present and past.

Challenge Example 1

He'll be there now – let's call him.

[i.e. there now]

Challenge Example 2

He'll be arriving at the station about now.

[i.e. happening now]

Challenge Example 3

He'll have arrived at the station by now.

[i.e. before now: in the past]

So, *will* cannot be, as its defining feature, '*about the future*' but ask learners about *will* and the vast majority will describe *will* as '*the future*' and will talk about something called '*the Future Simple*'. Why is this? Well, coursebooks and grammars typically introduce *will* as '*the future*' to balance the past and the present and do not contrast it with the other modal/modifying verbs or look at when *will* is not '*the future*' until much later, if ever. This strategy makes teaching *will* easier at the beginning (especially when teaching *in* English) but, like teaching the Simple Past, this just stores up trouble for the future. Learners will avoid using *will* except for the future; they will be puzzled when it isn't used for the future; and will have a limited range of modal verb forms which they use for the future i.e. they will use *will* for the future to the exclusion of other such verbs. Learners have enormous difficulty with the full spectrum of *will* uses as they are conditioned to think of *will* as '*the future*'. These are less than desirable outcomes of the initial decision to teach *will* as the Future Simple.

Basically, time does not equal tense. Past tenses are not *just* past tenses. They can be used for the present. Present Tenses are not *just* present tenses. They can be used for the past and future. *Will* is not '*the future*'. English verbs are trapped by their labels. Teachers and learners are also prisoners of the labels and the rules of use found in coursebooks.

The Present Perfect

The Present Perfect often causes problems for learners. The normal conclusion drawn from this is that it is a problematic form and *of course* learners will have problems with it – what is needed is more practice and time, so let's teach it again next year. Another possible reason is that it is not taught well i.e. that the presentation and the rules of use which are used are inadequate representations of the meaning of the form. The standard conclusion blames the form ('*It's a difficult form*') and blames or excuses the learners ('*It's difficult for them*'), while the second questions the analysis and teaching based on this analysis ('*Are we teaching it well enough?*').

Remember the rules of use for the present perfect from Part Two? Here they are again with challenge examples.

Rule 1

The present perfect simple is used to talk about an event which did or didn't happen in the time period up to now. The exact time of the event is not important. Example: *I've been to Paris several times*.

Challenge Example 1

Two friends talking

A: *You said you had toothache last week. Did you go to the dentist?*

B: *No, I didn't. It got better.*

Commentary: The time period is understood as being from the conversation last week to an unspecified point in time before now – maybe not quite up to now but potentially pretty close. B might just have come from the dentist. Still, the exact time in the understood period is not important - it is understood as some time *after then* but before now.

Challenge Example 2

An old man on his deathbed

Oh dear, I never went Paris.

Commentary: The trip to Paris did not happen in the time period up to now. Time has run out: it is seen as too late, though the man, if rich enough or with a wealthy benefactor, could be flown by air ambulance to Paris.

In both examples the time period is a period of time up to [or just before] now and the exact time is not important. Is the phrasing of the rule '*in the time period up to now*' of sufficient precision to exclude such examples?

Rule 2

The present perfect simple is used to talk about something that started in the past and continues up to now. The words *for* and *since* are often used. Example: *I have lived here for five years.*

Challenge Example: *I'm living in Riga.*

Commentary: The living in Riga started in the past and continues up to now. The '*used to talk about something that started in the past and continues up to now*' rule is not precise enough to explain only the present perfect. It could be used to help explain the present continuous, though *for* and *since* are *not* used. The contributions of the co-text commencing *for* and *since* are generally not examined as independent meaning contributions, but they will be in this grammar.

Rule 3

The present perfect simple is used to talk about something which happened in the recent past and has present relevance or importance. Example: *I've just finished.*

Challenge Example 1

A gunman starts shooting

Don't worry. I learnt to shoot recently and I have my gun; I'll take him.

Commentary: It is now suddenly important/relevant that I learnt to shoot recently [in the past].

Challenge Example 2

My friend died last week. The funeral is today.

Commentary: Past event. Present relevance.

Challenge Example 3

[US English]

I did it already.

Commentary: The *past simple + already* functions like the present perfect.

Now you might argue that all this is being very picky yet the fact remains that learners do have problems with the present perfect and the standard rules. The rules of use for the present perfect are not good enough. They are complex [what is *present relevance*?] and imprecise [*about something that started in the past and continues up to now*], and elements of them can be used to explain examples of the simple past and present continuous. If you are going to give or use rules then they should be precise and unambiguous, as well as being easily understandable for learners of whatever level they are given to and they need to be operationalisable - if they cannot be used then there is no point in giving them.

3.10 Conditionals

We touched on conditionals above, noticing the past tense [usually referred to as the *past subjunctive*] being used in non-past conditional sentences. The whole area of conditionals presents a number of problems. These issues include the conditionals which are not described by the traditional 0, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and mixed paradigm and the complexity of the metalanguage used to explain such structures.

The traditional paradigm does not describe all conditional structures and restricting the teaching to the forms mentioned in Part Two limits the learners' ability to understand and produce conditionals. They will have a limited conditional event horizon: meaning that they will have difficulty understanding other conditional forms because they will not be able to '*see*' them and will never try to produce them.

The metalanguage used to explain conditionals is itself problematic. Look at this example from a popular elementary grammar self-study book.

> Conditional sentences describe possible situations and their possible results. In 'real situations' we are certain that something will happen if someone does something. We call these 'real situations' in contrast to 'imaginary situations'.
>
> M. Vince, Elementary Language Practice

For an *elementary* learner to understand this *self-study* explanation about conditionals they have to *already* be able to understand conditionals. Is any further comment necessary? In any grammar explanation the language used should be simpler than the language point being explained and be comprehensible to the learners. If this is not possible in English then resort should be made to diagrams, and, if necessary, or perhaps as a matter of routine if you can [see Part Eleven], to the learners' first language.

Some argue that the subjunctive [a grammatical mood rather than a tense] is used in conditionals and it is a special verb form.

(3.10.1) If I were you....

This form is best seen as an idiomatic use rather than a special verb form and indeed the following form is becoming more conventional:

(3.10.2) If I was you....

This brings us back to *the past is not just the past* observation in the discussion above. In a good grammatical description [the past would be *just* the past. It would be an internally consistent *past* concept and the idea of *pastness*, embodied in the description and label, would apply whenever such forms were used. Obviously this is not the case. And if the grammatical past cannot be just the past, then what is it?

3.11 Transformations

There are two areas in coursebooks which have traditionally used transformations: questions and active/passive.

Questions

Some teachers still present questions as transformed statements ['*Move the auxiliary here or use do*'], drawing arrows on the board from a statement to a question and using words like '*invert*' [see Figures 2.4 and 2.5]. Coursebooks still ask learners to look at the answers and write the questions. Now, it is possible to make this relationship between statements and questions and draw such diagrams, and such diagrams make a sort of sense but does it reflect reality and does it serve a useful purpose?

Some theorists argue that we do transform or move the elements of a sentence around before [or even after] we utter it. A more believable theory suggests that we do no such thing and that we choose to place words in a certain order without creating a mental representation of a '*sentence*' which needs to be subsequently reordered. This is a placement theory of language, not a transformational one. In this theory the possible ordering of words is, to a large degree, encoded with the words themselves in the lexicon - not in movement or transformational rules.

Placement theory states that questions are fundamentally different sentence or utterance forms from statements. Questions are *not* re-arranged versions of statements. They are certainly not re-arranged versions of expected answers. ['*Look at the answers. Write the questions.*'] Outside the classroom, we do not imagine the statement/response we expect and then transform that into a question [unless of course we've been taught to attempt such a thing]. Doing so would be an absurd use of cognitive and processing resources. Transforming statements into questions serves no justifiable pedagogical purpose, even as an introductory phase of learning about questions. It is actually pedagogically harmful because a link is made in the minds of learners between statements and questions which does not exist and this has a long term detrimental impact of the learner's ability to ask questions; just like teaching the '*Simple Past*' has an impact on the learner's ability to use the form in its full range of uses.

Simply contrasting the forms of statements and questions and pointing out the differences in word order ['*This is a statement; this is a question.*'] is necessary. Why questions are different from statements is a rewarding question; one which coursebook grammars fail to even ask, let alone answer. Questions are different for interesting reasons, as we shall see in Part Eight, and these differences should be explored with your learners instead of spending time on meaningless transformations.

3.12 Active and Passive

Similarly, transforming active sentences into passive ones is a pedagogically damaging exercise. Passive sentences are *not* versions of active ones, according to Placement Theory. The object of an active sentences does not become the subject of a passive one and understanding passives does not involve the manipulation of sentences in this way. We produce passive forms because we need passive forms to say what we want to say – not because we have an active sentence and then choose to transform it into the passive. The passive is a choice which depends on a number of things, mainly: what we choose to have as the first focus of the sentence [the subject in the traditional terminology] and whether the discourse 'requires' a passive. The passive is an

active choice, or rather a logical choice, but a choice nevertheless. The choice boils down to '*I choose to start here*.' While sometimes we have a real choice about whether to use an active or passive sentence to say what we want to say [e.g. '*I rejected your application...*' or '*Your application has been rejected.....*'] we choose; we do not transform; though we might decide to rephrase i.e. we make a choice and then we change our mind; this is especially true in writing. This would be a conscious decision, not the unconscious or pre-conscious transformation of a more basic active sentence into a more complex passive one, which is then consciously realised in speech or writing, as envisaged in traditional grammar.

Learners need to know when they should choose to use the passive rather than the active. They should not be spending time on transforming one into the other. Transformations [whether statements into questions or active into passive] are a complete misconception of how language is produced or is used.

3.13 A new Pedagogical Grammar of English

Is it possible to imagine a new pedagogical grammar of English which will avoid the half truths and distortions of the coursebook short-cut rules of use? One which avoids the confusion about labels [past] and use [present]? And one which does not consider '*will*' as the future or demand transformations of statements into questions? Is it also possible to write a new pedagogical grammar of English which will equip learners to learn the grammar which they will not be taught?

Yes, it is.

4 Re-imagining English Grammar

The next four parts of the grammar present a re-imagining of English grammar in which English pedagogical grammar is seen as an interlocking system of three parts: Distance, Meanings and Conventions.

Before we examine the concepts of language, words and grammar and the concepts of Distance, Meaning and Conventions, let us consider five other important general concepts about language which we need to bear in mind when we examine English and its grammar. These concepts are *context* and *co-text*, *utterance time* and *event time*, and the idea of *synonymy*.

4.1 Context and Co-text

The first two concepts of *context* [the situation] and *co-text* [words which appear together] are much more important to meaning than coursebook grammars emphasise. Consider these three examples of the use of the word *bank* in the *context* that it has been raining 40 days and 40 nights.

(4.1.1) I've been to the bank. [big sigh]

(4.1.2) I've been to the bank and the water level is still rising. It's time to inflate the boat.

(4.1.3) The water level is still rising. I wouldn't bank on it stopping. It's time to leave town.

In each example *bank* has a different meaning: two uses as a noun and one as a verb. In the first example the meaning of *bank* is unclear but the default understanding would be the bank where you can keep money, though, because of the Biblical meteorological conditions [the context] and the fact that the sentence would not exist in a co-textual vacuum [What was said earlier? What was said after?], it might refer to the river bank. The meaning is unclear to us but not to the speaker and listener. In the second and third examples the meaning is clear from the *co-text*. It seems then that the word *bank* does not actually *really* mean anything [its meaning is *indeterminate*, a bit like Schrödinger's cat - is it dead or alive?] until it is placed in *co-text* which is appropriate for the *context*. We can say that many words do not really mean anything precise - they have abstract *potential* meanings, though a meaning may be more or less likely - unless they are being used in a *meaning-giving context*. Sometimes *co-text* is not necessary, as we shall see later. Other words, of course, like *haemoglobin*, have one precise meaning.

4.2 Utterance and Event Time

Co-text includes such things as time phrases. These phrases can provide an explicit time reference, or anchor, [e.g. *on Tuesday*] for an utterance or sentence, or the time reference may be implicit from the context and/or co-text. When we consider time we need to think of two times: *utterance time* and *event time*. *Utterance time* is always here and now as it is when something is said, even when we are reporting what someone said. *Event time*, the time an action takes place, may be the same as *utterance time* or it may be different:

(4.2.1) I live here. [*Utterance* and *event time* = now]

(4.2.2) I leave tomorrow. [*Utterance time* = now; event time = *tomorrow*]

4.3 Synonymy

The fifth idea is *synonymy*. Some words are synonyms of each other [e.g. *big* and *large*] but it is crucial to remember that there are no exact synonyms in English. Each synonym will have its own '*range*' and these ranges will overlap to some extent [which is why they can be considered synonyms] but where they do not overlap they are not synonyms. This may show up in the different *collocations*, *connotations* or grammatical uses [*colligations*] the words may have. We can say '*It's a big deal*' not a '*large deal*'; *slim* has a positive connotation while *thin* does not; *to be able to* is used in certain grammatical positions where *can* cannot be used.

The speaker's socio-cultural background is also important. The term *couch* is an American term for *settee* or *sofa* in British English. Whether you use *sofa* or *settee* in Britain will depend on your social class: they are not exact synonyms. They may be meaning synonyms but they are not usage synonyms. Similarly, *petrol station* and *gas station* denote the same concept and in a strict meaning sense can be considered synonyms yet they each have their own geographical range and are inoperative outside that range. Thus synonymy can depend on geography and socio-cultural background. To ignore this can lead to error, amusement or even embarrassment e.g. the noun *rubber* is a British synonym of the US term *eraser*, while in the US it is a slang synonym for *condom*; if you were an American, whether you would ask for a rubber or a condom would depend on the situation, who you were talking to and how much class you had.

The meaning of synonymy needs to be explained as '*the situation where certain words can sometimes be used instead of each other*'; while at other times this interchangeability will not be possible.

Now, having considered these five ideas, let us start our re-imagining of grammar by considering what language is, what words mean, and what kind of grammar we really need.

4.4 What is Language?

Language is made up of sounds [phonemes] which combine to make words. Words represent ideas of things or actions etc. Words are combined to make utterances – stretches of spoken language - which tell or ask something. Written language is normally composed of combinations of phonemes represented by letters and combined into words and then combined into what are called sentences. These utterances and sentences consist of sequences of words and, within these sequences, phrases and collocations of words can be identified. Collocations are combinations of words which are statistically likely to co-occur in a text [e.g. '*beautiful woman*' is more likely than '*handsome woman*', though both are allowable, with different meanings; '*petrol station*' etc.]. Any pedagogical grammar needs to be able to explain or account for collocations, and the structure of utterances and sentences: why does one word follow another? How can we do that?

Language is not rule-based

It is impossible to write rules to account for every feature of language. Rules cannot account for collocations, for example, although many teachers across the world attempt to make rules for them. Sometimes they are successful: *Say tall man, not high man*. Sometimes they are not so successful: '*You can say beautiful woman and handsome man; not beautiful man.*'. We can actually say '*beautiful man*'. If you google the collocations '*beautiful man*' and '*handsome man*' using Advanced Search and, restrict your search to UK sites for example, you will find '*handsome man*' is twice as common as '*beautiful man*' but *beautiful man* does exist as a quite common and acceptable collocation.[1] Like '*beautiful woman*' and '*handsome woman*', the difference is in the relative frequency *and* the difference in meaning. To be absolute about not using '*beautiful man*' is to be wrong. Similarly, you can 'Google Fight' words or phrases to find out which is more common 'on the web' e.g. a Google Fight between *a thirst for knowledge* and *a hunger for knowledge* will show, perhaps surprisingly, at least it was to me, that *a hunger* is more frequent[2].

[1] Beautiful man: 38,000; handsome man: 70,000

[2] A thirst for knowledge: 1,270,000; a hunger for knowledge: 14,500,000

Rules cannot account for the differences in the use of words and grammar by different people; or for the differences between synonyms; and you cannot write a rule for every collocation.

Co-operate or cooperate?

Why do some people write '*co-operate*', while others write '*cooperate*'? Why do some say '*disinterested*' while others, meaning the same, say '*uninterested*'? Why do Americans say '*I could care less*' and the British say '*I couldn't care less*'? Why do some people '*upchuck*' while others '*chuck up*'? Why do some say '*I know nothing*', some '*I don't know nothing*', and others '*I don't know anything*'?

The answer to these and other questions, is in Lexical Priming theory (Hoey, 2005). This theory suggests that we are primed [readied by our prior experience of words] to expect words to be in the company of other words [their collocations] and also expect words to appear in certain grammatical situations [their grammatical colligations] and in certain positions in text and discourse [their textual colligations]. Thus, the collocation '*by the way*' would be primed for us to appear, most of the time, at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of an utterance; corpus research could tell us which position – sentence initial, middle or final – is the most common [and therefore strongest] priming. We learn the language from our exposure to it and this *primes* us to reproduce the language which we have been exposed to, though with *write errors*, to borrow a computer term. Each person will have their own unique set of primings, which will be stronger or weaker depending on the learning experience, but their primings will closely follow those of the speech community in which they learnt the language [see Figure 4.1]. There will be broad agreement with some variation.

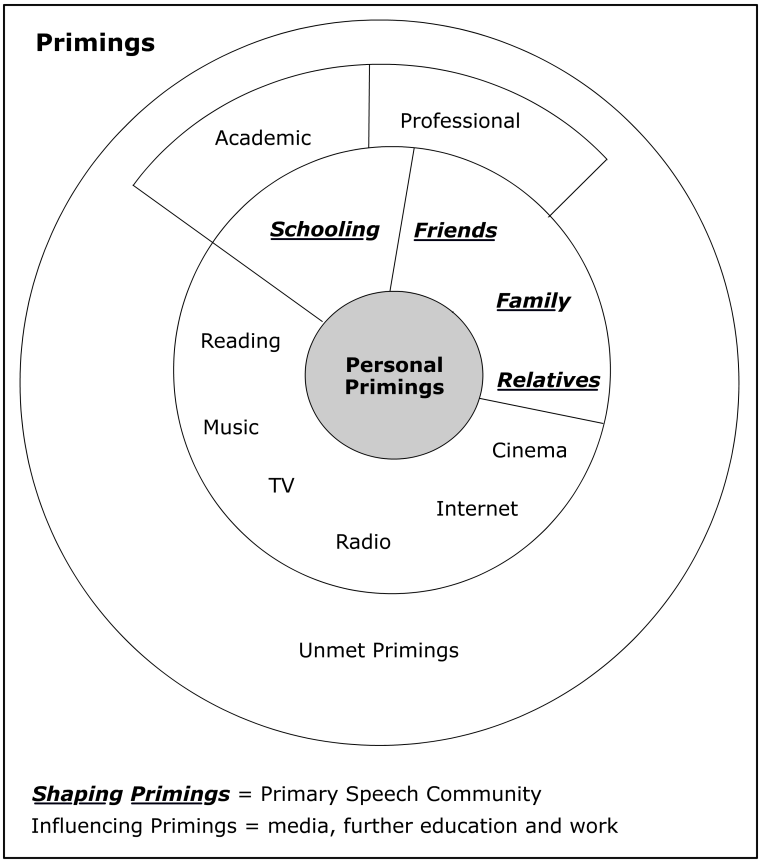


Figure 4.1: Primings

This means that language is not rule-based but convention-based. The speech communities *collectively agree* their language conventions through a process of use. This explains the differences in language use, language

change, collocations and more. Collocations are collocations because those are the collocations people use and understand and expect to hear. Lexical priming explains why we say, for example, *eternal youth* rather than *never-ending youth*.

This is important because language learning is not about learning rules but learning language: the conventional meanings of words and how they are conventionally used. This is partly what the rules of use approach tries [and fails to do] but it over emphasizes rules [which are often inadequate as we have seen in Part Three] and under emphasizes meaning and what cannot be ruled on.

Some writers think that *co-operate* needs a hyphen to help with pronunciation and understanding; others do not and write cooperate. Americans say '*I could care less*' because that is the convention there. The British say '*I couldn't care less*' because that makes grammatical-meaning sense to them. Some Americans '*upchuck*' [vomit] while [some] Scots '*chuck up*' instead. The Scots have followed the usual phrasal verb pattern [*verb + preposition/particle*] while the Americans have followed the *up + verb/noun* pattern of *upload*; *update*, *upskill* etc. This is a purely speech community convention decision. One has to respect the American use of '*I could care less*' despite the fact that is makes no grammatical sense at all. It still makes meaning sense, I am told, to Americans.

Those who make the useful distinction between '*disinterested*' and '*uninterested*' are working under different primings from those who use '*uninterested*' to mean both '*uninterested*' and '*disinterested*' with the resulting confusion and annoyance to those, like me, who make the finer distinction. Those who do not make the distinction often appeal to irrelevant historical data to justify themselves: '*People 200/300/400 years ago used uninterested to mean disinterested*'. Some people [in certain communities] will be primed to use the double negative ['*I don't know nothing about that.*'], while others will be primed not to, either through their family [and friends'] speech community and/or through their schooling.

Primings can change when novel words and/or uses [e.g. *to grow a business; I have sighted the document; how will this impact us?*] become more widespread in the speech community, nowadays often through the ubiquity of mass media, and thus the language changes. The standard language of intra-societal communication can also change when the formal education system abandons aspirational standards and the language of home and the local community becomes the acceptable language of the classroom. Written language is also conventional language although spelling and punctuation are more learned conventions than the acquired conventions of spoken English and thus more susceptible to decay through not being taught. Conventions govern word meaning, distinctions between words, and how words are used together e.g. the word order [it's *black and white*, not *white and black*]. Syntax rules can tell us we can have a *adjective and adjective* sequence [e.g. *white and black; evil and good*] but cannot tell us that it should be *black and white* or *good and evil*.

It may not seem necessary to make a distinction between a rule and a convention but they are not synonyms and have completely different connotations and collocations. Conventions are agreed; rules are written and enforced. Conventions change; rules are broken. Rule breakers are punished. Language '*rules*' restrict the language; language conventions aid communication. Unconventional people are admired or shunned, depending on the community's decision.

Remember that Americans saying '*I could care less*' are not breaking a rule - they are just following a different convention: language is convention-based not rule based.

The Associative Model of English

Priming is the way the Associative Model of English works. A person's Lexicon contains all the words in the language which the person has been primed with, both stored singly and in combination with other words e.g. in idioms. The words are coded with information about how they can be used: their meaning, form and pronunciation; collocates; semantic associations; pragmatic functions; colligations; grammatical role; textual collocations; textual semantic associations and colligations. This Lexicon is thus a store of words and information how to conventionally use them [w+].

Communicative need draws words from the lexicon and they are placed in a linear sequence of an utterance or sentence according to the requirements of the discourse [e.g. as a statement or a question, as required]

and requirements for the structuring of information [Focus + Information]. Only words which can associate together can be used together and there are conventional sequences, or pathways of choices, of verbs and nouns. All this practical knowledge has been established by priming.

The model is shown in Figure 4.2 below.

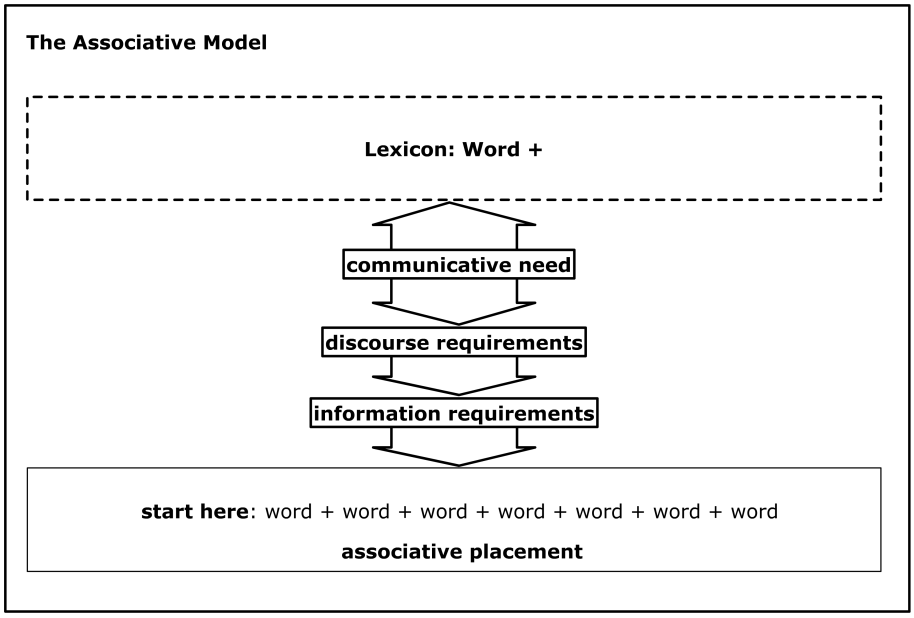


Figure 4.2: The Associative Model of English

In English, words are placed together in a linear sequence according to the web of their associations, the underlying control of distance and the requirements of discourse and information setting, as we shall see later. Another factor though, which we will discuss here, is speaker/writer choice.

Let's look at the following sentence [from the book *59 Seconds*] which has been diagrammed in Figure 4.3 below.

(4.4.1) Willing volunteers were asked to come to an exhibition one at a time and were told that on arrival they would be met by another participant.

The diagram highlights a number of important issues.

1. The sentence is clearly about *volunteers* - the underlined root of the sentence.

2. There are a number of verb pathways about these volunteers.

3. There are a number of prepositional phrases which are associated with the verbs. The position of some of these prepositional phrases are subject to speaker choice. The phrase '*on arrival*', for instance, is associated with the verb '*met*' [linked with '*met*' by a dotted arrow] but is placed by the writer after '*that*' [linked by a solid arrow]. It could also have been placed after the word '*participants*'. Its exact position depends on the speaker's choice. Similarly, '*one at a time*' could have been placed after the verb '*come*'.

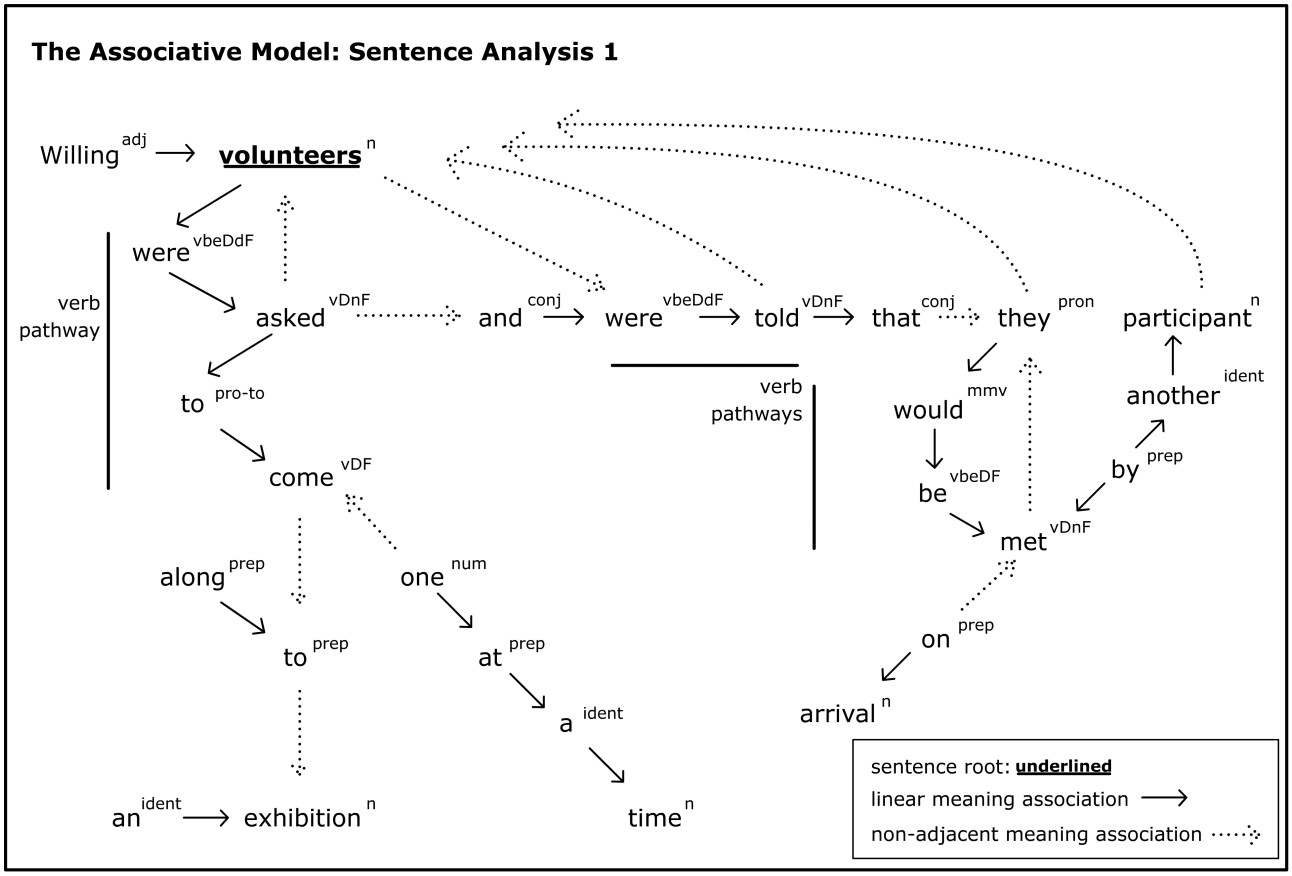


Figure 4.3: The Associative Model: Analysis 1

Individual Word Meanings

Language is based on individual word meanings – the prime concepts of the language. These are combined to accumulate meaning in complex propositions. As in the examples above, '*bank*' does not have real meaning until it is combined with co-text. Similarly, what has been termed the present continuous is really just a collocation of a form of *Be* and a *Do-ing Form* [present participle]; it is a conventional collocation of two ideas. The patterns of these complex ideas are governed by Power Conventions, mainly the *conventions of the sequence* [i.e. '*rules' of word order*].

Form Meanings

Each word, whatever type of word it is, verb, noun, adjective etc., has a meaning in the co-text and context it is used in. Every word in the language has meaning, or can take on meaning. Each word has an idea [or ideas] it represents. Even *it* in '*It is raining*c has meaning, though it is difficult to express that meaning. The noun *chair* represents [in one meaning] the idea of a chair – a particular idea of a piece of furniture to sit on and one which contrasts, in its idea, with other things to sit on, like a box, stool, sofa/settee/couch, settle, a throne made of the skulls of your enemies etc. A word has an idea of what it is and what it is not.

Some words, notably verbs but also some adjectives and nouns, also have other ideas associated with the particular form being used. These are the *form meanings*. The '*three forms of the verb*'; the so-called *first form*, *second form* and *third form* [the *past participle*] are different forms for a reason; the reason being that the form itself carries a *meaning idea*. We don't just '*use the third form*' but we use that form for a reason. What that reason is, is an interesting question.

What kind of grammar can describe what these word meanings and form meanings are and how we use them?

4.5 An Active Prospective Grammar

Language can, despite what many grammarians choose to believe, be viewed as, be produced as, and understood as linear chains (Brazil, 1995). Brazil's basic premise was that we talk, word by word, in a chain, to '*tell*' a message (or to *ask* a question). He explored the grammar of these chains of words by analysing an anecdote and showed that it is possible to build a linear grammar of language which explains how spoken language is constructed, not as words fitting into slots in sentences trees, or being moved around or transformed (as linguistics like Chomsky would suppose) but as the build-up of meaning when one word follows another [constrained by what has come before], with the sequence ending when the message is communicated to the listener. This kind of grammar is an *on-line* grammar which attempts to explain how a listener might be able to decode meaning in real time from a string of words. Brazil's idea that we process the incoming stream of language as we hear [or see] it dovetails with the idea of lexical priming that we operate on the basis of our expectations of a word's associations, which are continually being adjusted in response to the developing text.

Discourse is not about filling slots in prefabricated sentences with verbs or nouns etc. Or of transforming sentence-basic elements by moving around words from slot to empty slot until we produce what we want to say. My new metaphor is that an utterance or sentence - an ask or tell – is a *journey*. It is a word-idea journey with a beginning and an end and the way you get to the end of the journey is constrained by the choices you make on the way; though there may be false starts and backtracking in the case of speech. One choice leads to another, more or less limited, set of options. You place one word after another like you place one foot in front of the other. It is a *word-idea journey* as individual words [because of their meaning] are used to build up more complex ideas and meaning has to be understood one word at a time, though when an idiom or set phrase is employed it can be processed as one unit of meaning because of its familiarity. Words have ideas which they add to an ask or tell to communicate what the speaker wants to communicate. You make a choice from the available options, depending on your meaning, and then continue on your way.

The two most important determiners of a journey are where you start and where you want to end up. Your idea of your meaning or the information you want to convey limits your choice of starting point [and this might also be constrained by other factors e.g. what has been said before]. Then you choose: *I choose to start here*; or, as expressed in a more minimal way: *Start here*. Then you start.

A speaker produces an utterance by building up meaning in a linear sequence by making choices on the way:

John [not *Fred* etc.] + *is* [not *was* etc.] + *a* [not *an* or *the* or nothing] + *real* [not another adjective or noun etc.] + *pain* [not *idiot* etc.] + *in the neck* [not *in the backside* etc.].

The speaker has an idea of what they want to say and uses the conventions of the sequence [which words can follow which, i.e. which words are associated with which] to structure their choice of words. The speaker knows their destination [the communication of their thoughts for whatever purpose] and [roughly] their route to that destination. The route is composed of the meanings they want to communicate and the conventions of the sequence help them on their way. The speaker is slightly ahead of themselves. Their thoughts proceed their words - what they are saying is already processed speech - they are mostly concentrating on the next part of what they are saying. The speaker can use set phrases – conventional language in established chunks – to make the journey easier. A word will be statistically more likely to trigger words following it in lexical phrases [*e.g. by the by/way*] and idioms [*e.g. It was written down in black and white*]. The speaker uses these more or less fixed expressions to make their speech easier to construct and easier to understand.

Meanwhile, the listener has a much less precise of the word-idea journey they are about to undertake as they listen to the speaker. They will have some idea from the context and their knowledge of the speaker [e.g a language teacher is unlikely to discourse on molecular biology in a staff meeting, though it has happened]. Using their active prospective grammar, the listener constantly adjusts their expectations of what will come next based on what has come before; adjusting to what is allowable in conventional language e.g. the possible sequence of verbs, the sequence of words in set phrases etc. Both the speaker and the listener are using their

active prospective grammar but in slightly different ways. The speaker uses their grammar to get to their destination [the delivery of the meaning they want to communicate]. The listener needs a knowledge of grammar to understand the journey because by understanding the journey they understand the message.

Listening to (and producing) and understanding utterances is not a case of applying language descriptions of verb structures ['*Ah the present perfect!*'] and rules of use ['*The present perfect used for .....whatever.*']. The listener does not analyse completed utterances because a person does not have the necessary cognitive resources to do this and simultaneously attend to further input. The listener processes utterances [to whatever depth is required] as they are received and continually adjusts their understanding retrospectively and adjusts their prospective expectations.

Structures [like the present perfect] are clear only in retrospect: *Look! The Present Perfect! Let's see if we can find more examples in the text children*. These are academic observations on completed text, not a way of understanding unfolding text. A grammar written on the basis of completed text is a *retrospective* grammar not an active grammar. An *active prospective grammar* is one you can use to understand text which is happening now. Our prospective grammar tells us what is permitted to come next in the steam of speech and what is likely to come next. It often cannot tell us what *will* come next. If a person says '*I have...*' then the present perfect Third Form is only one of many options of what could come next [*I have been...*; *I have to...*; *I have no idea*; *I have a...*; *I haven't any...*]. Your active prospective grammar helps you deal with or cope with the language that is coming [both spoken and written]. It is a grammar of your expectations of associations, and of word meanings, including form meanings. It is a grammar to use *as* you use language. As such it is a grammar which requires an understanding of word meaning, word form meaning, and a word's associations.

We need an active prospective pedagogical grammar which is based on the word and form meanings of individual words, and one that recognizes that language is convention based. This grammar in my re-imagining is, as I noted before, a system of three interdependent parts: the ideas of Distance, the ideas of Meaning associated with individual words and the Conventions that arise because of lexical priming, and these are outlined below.

4.6 The Grammar [Distance, Meanings & Conventions] System

Distance

Each utterance is either unmarked – that is close - or marked as distant in some way - usually by verbs and adverbs. The distance is either in time, space, reality or formality. It might be explicitly marked by these verbs and adverbs or implicitly marked by association with another utterance or by the wider context. Distance also patterns utterances and text.

Meanings

At the heart of this grammar is the concept that there are key ideas – including and beyond the ideas of distance – which need to be understood and which can and should be taught. These meanings are associated with certain words - mainly verbs but also nouns and adjectives. Some verb, noun and adjective forms are different from other words because the form has an idea as well and if you change the form you change the form meaning idea, though you retain the lexical idea of the word.

Conventions

This part of the grammar system is concerned with how the ideas of distance and meaning are put together to create more complex propositions through the conventions of the sequence, and the other conventions of English. English uses word placement to help realise the associative meanings between words and phrases.

The conventions of collocation and word order constrain choices so that messages are understandable and easier to produce. By producing language which you and others have been primed to hear and understand you increase your chance of being understood and reduce the processing load of both speaker and listener.

Let us consider the D of the G[DMC] system - Distance - first.

5 Distance

Our whole existence is centred on here and now. We live in the moment and see the past and future from this moment. In the here and now of everyday existence we can often do without any grammar. At home with Ilona, my lady wife, I can ask – purely lexically – '*Coffee?*' [without any co-text] and she will understand my message and respond appropriately. We share the context: space [our home] and time [now] and knowledge [my wife likes coffee; she hasn't had a drink for a while; it's my turn to make the drinks etc.]

In these kind of immediate situations we can operate with very little or no grammar as such and communicate perfectly effectively. One can imagine that this is how language started, with the naming of things and the use of gestures in the immediate here and now of a hunting and gathering existence and this would have quickly become: *Deer there - you kill - we eat*.

When we are removed from a shared here and now or when we wish to refer to things which are distanced in some way (in time or space or reality) from the here and now, then we need to resort to grammar to ensure that our message is understood. We cannot talk about the hunting last week or about Napoleon, Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar without a sophisticated command of grammar that enables us to talk about, and sequence, past events, that is events in past distance. We need to mark our language for distance so that the language we use is congruent with the distance we are talking about; we orient the listener to five kinds of distance – the ideas of distance orientation – not just the distance of past time.

The second element of distance is the deep structure of distance which patterns sentences, utterances and text and governs word order and collocation. Before considering this aspect in more detail we will look at distance orientation. So we will be working from the surface to the deep structure of distance.

Terminology Note

In this chapter of the book we will start using new terminology, which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. These terms include:

The Do Form, aka the present simple, infinitive etc.

The Did Form, aka the past simple, the second form etc.

The Do-ing Form, aka the present participle, –ing form etc.

The Done Form, aka the past participle, the third form etc.

5.1 The Five Distances of Orientation

There are five principle orientation distances to consider as Figure 5.1 shows. In this grammar we will be redefining tense as distance and including the conditional and subjunctive moods into this new definition of tense-distance. This greatly regularises the language. When the learner meets subjunctives they should dealt with as idiomatic expressions of the verb Be [e.g. *If I were you....*] or as idiomatic verb forms following certain verbs [e.g. *I insist that he be present; I requested that he come on time*]. Most modern British English coursebooks avoid teaching the past and present subjunctive but still have to deal with the idea of the *pastness* or the irregularity of the forms in the third person.

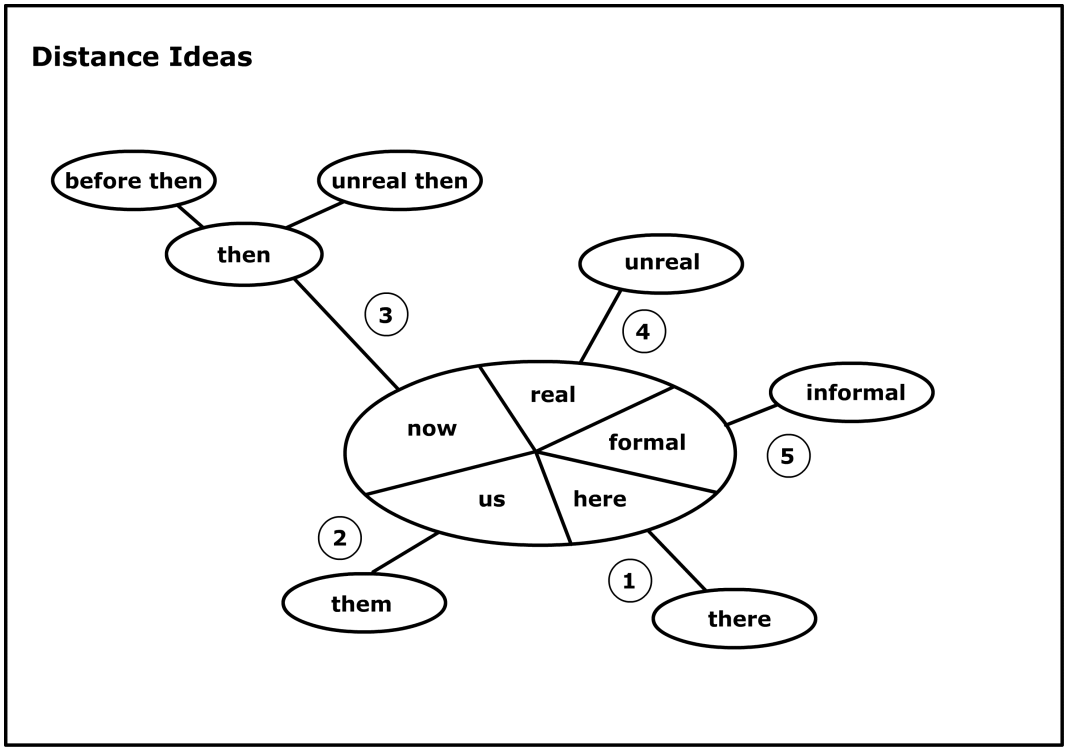


Figure 5.1: Distance Ideas

5.2 Idea 1: Here and There: This and That: Space Distance

We are always *here*. We have bodies which are here in time and space. *Here* is the unmarked idea. Here where I am sitting; or here in my room, or in my home; or here in Riga; or here in Latvia; or here in Europe; or here on this planet. *Here* is always seen as close to me as it is where I am.

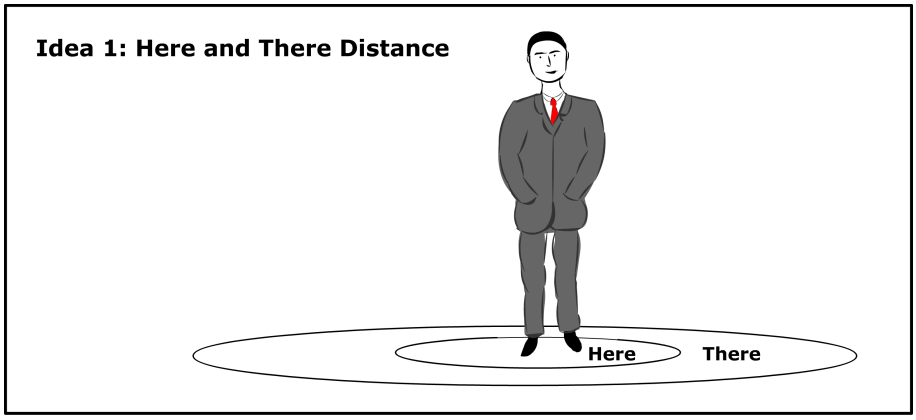


Figure 5.2: Idea 1 Here and There

There, on the the other hand, is not *here*: it is distant in space; over there. *Here* is close; *there* is distant. Not a particular defined distance, say 5cm or 1km, rather it is the idea of something being distant to some small or large degree.

Related to this idea are the concepts of *this* and *that*. *This* is close; *that* is distant: *this* one (near here) or *that* one; *this* report vs *that* report.

What your learners need to know

- We see everything from *here*. *Here* is close; *there* is distant; *this* is close; *that* is distant.

These are easy enough ideas for your learners to grasp without going into '*distance*' but it is very important that you establish the non-metaphorical reference idea of physical distance before your learners go on to consider other ideas of distance.

5.3 Idea 2: Us and Them

The idea of *I* is close to me as it is *me*. *You* are not me so you are not close. *We*, on the other hand, and *us* include *me* (and *you*) so *we* and *us* are close. *He, she, it* and *them* are distant from *me* and *us* and *we*.

Close: *I, me, us, my, mine, ours*

Distant: *you, he, she, it, them, they, yours, his, hers theirs*

While this might seem to be a minor point some speakers [e.g. Russian native speakers] often say things like this:

(5.3.1) *We and [or with] Sasha went to the cinema last night.

The *we* here is used in conjunction with the *naming* of the second person in that *we*: *we* is speaker A *and* Sasha; no-one else. An English person would think that at least three people went to the cinema [we + Sasha] and wonder who the *we* is. This, however, is unambiguous:

(5.3.2) I went to the cinema last night with Sasha. We had a great time.

What your learners need to know

- These are close ideas: *I, me, us, we, my, mine* and *ours*. These ideas include '*me*'.
- These are distant ideas: *you, he, she, it, them, they, yours, his, hers* and *theirs*. They do not include '*me*'.

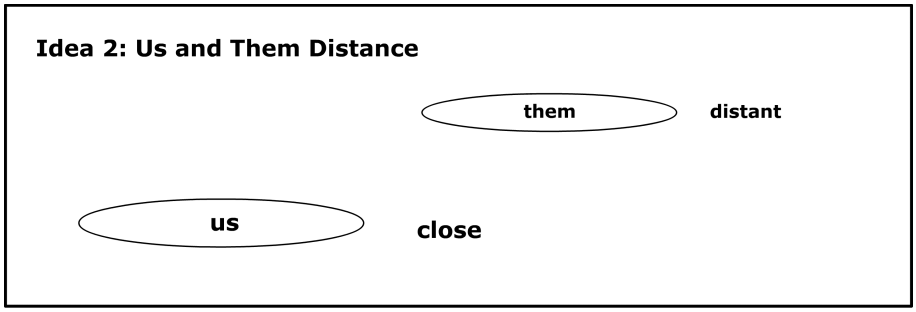


Figure 5.3: Idea 2 Us and Them

5.4 Idea 3: Now and Then: Time Distance

Like the physical distance of here and there, time can be seen as close or distant. We live in and see the world from the *here and now*. *There and then* are distant.

Now is not just exactly this instant but can also be a more general time centred on now. *Then* is a time in the past or the future:

(5.4.1) I finish at 8. I'll do it then [i.e. at/after 8].

The phrase *now and then* is similar to *from time to time*. Notice that *here*, *now*, *there* and *then* combine in different ways.

here and now
here and there
now and then
there and then

Time distance from now is generally marked, in the past, by a *distant form* of the verb and by an explicit or implicit time adverbial or reference:

(5.4.2) I lived there from 1983 to 1986.

In 5.4.2 the Did Form [*lived*; the so-called Past Simple] is the distant form. It can be placed in past time with an explicit distant adverb or time adverbial or an implicit understanding that the reference is to past time.

(5.4.3) I saw him yesterday. [explicit past time reference]

(5.4.4) I went to eight different schools. [implicit past time reference]

The Distant form of the verb – the Did Form – can be used to talk about past time distance. You can use the form to talk about distant events (from one second ago to millions of years ago). It can also be used to express other distances, which is why it should not be referred to as the Past Simple. Tense marks distance, not time.

More distance in the past is marked by the so-called Past Perfect form.

(5.4.5) He had left before I arrived.

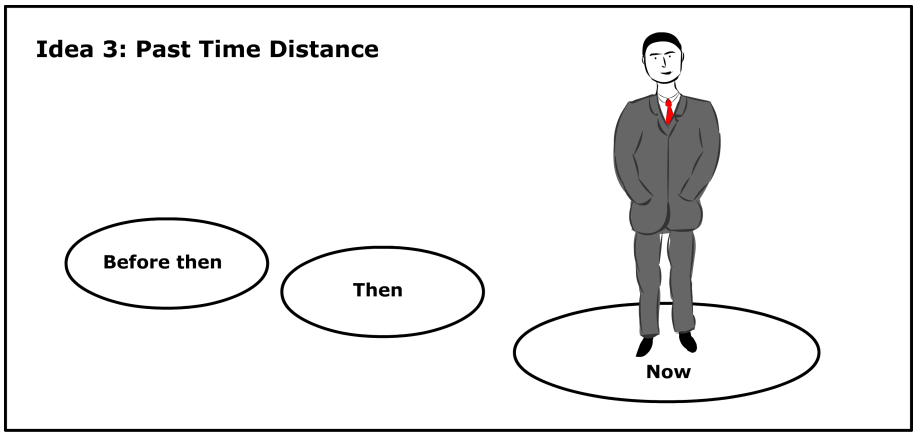


Figure 5.4: Idea 3 Past Time Distance

What your learners need to know

- Past time distance is *one* kind of distance.
- It is marked by the Did Form e.g. *went, wanted, got*.
- More distance in the past is marked by the so-called Past Perfect form: *had done* etc.
- Distance [or the lack of such] is always marked or [unmarked] on the first verb of a phrase.
- Tense = distance.

5.5 Idea 4: Real and Unreal: Reality Distance

Another aspect of our existence is our reality. We work, live, breathe, love, sleep in reality. We can, however, imagine an unreal existence which is contrary to the actual facts of our real now or of our real past, or of our probable future. This unreality is marked by Distant Forms to show that it is not of our reality.

English speakers are very economical in the way they use the resources of the language. Exactly the same distancing system used to mark past time distance is also used to mark unreality.

Thus, in my now, the reality is: *I can drive. But I don't have a car. I take the train to work*. A comment focusing on an unreal idea in this situation could be:

(5.5.1) If I had a car, I could drive to work.

The statement above uses three devices to show the unreality: *if*, *had* and *could*. *If* marks the statement as some kind of possibility, not necessarily unreal - the following verb forms clarify the kind of possibility being expressed. The forms *had* and *could*, the distant forms of *have* and *can*, confirm that the statement is about an unreal situation rather than a likely or unlikely eventuality. The distant forms distance the idea from reality, which would be expressed by close forms.

You might find the term *counter-factual*, contrasted with factual and translated if necessary, useful here.

Unreal Past

If we need to distance statements from the reality of the past (remember the past is also seen as distant from now), we need *more* distance because we want to show unreal distance from something which is already distant. Thus:

(5.5.2) Real: I was sick last weekend.

Here, the Did Form *was* and the time phrase *last weekend* mark the distance in time.

(5.5.3) Unreal: If I hadn't been sick, I would've gone to the cinema.

Again, in this example, *if* is used to mark that some kind of possibility is coming; the more Distant (and negative) Form *hadn't + been + sick* marks the distance from the reality of being sick last weekend [*I was sick*]; *would've gone* continues to mark reality distance, contrasted with the fact that I didn't go to the cinema.

What your learners need to know

- Reality distance is another kind of distance.
- It is marked by the Did Form when talking about now.
- When talking about events in the past, reality distance is marked by *had* (the Did form) + the Done Form e.g. *been*.
- Distance [or the lack of such] is always marked on the first verb of a main verb phrase.

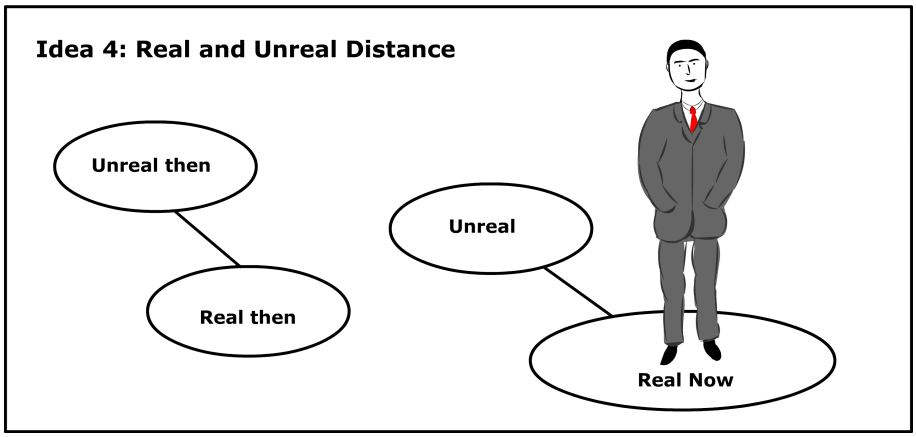


Figure 5.5: Idea 4 Real and Unreal Distance

5.6 Idea 5: Informal and Formal: Formality Distance

We are social animals and most of us are aware of the differences in social status, the differences in the level of formality in different situations, the appropriate behaviour and language needed in these situations, and the differences between people of different ranks, and degrees of relational closeness [family, children, lovers, friends, colleagues etc.]. We use precisely the *same* distance system to mark distance in social *formality* as we do to mark distance in *time* and distance in *reality* – principally distant verb forms and polite language – as the following examples show.

Direct – superior to subordinate

For example: officer to soldier; teacher to learner.

Form: e.g. Do Form of verb; strong tone.

(5.6.1) Just do it.

(5.6.2) Attention!

(5.6.3) Sit down.

Close informal

For example: family

Form: e.g. Do Form of verb; soft tone.

(5.6.4) Give's a kiss.

(5.6.5) Love you

Informal

For example: family and friends.

Form: e.g. Do Form of the verb or Do Form missing; Do-ing Form; soft, cheerful or neutral tone.

(5.6.6) Let's go to the cinema.

(5.6.7) Do you want a drink?

(5.6.8) Sandwich anyone?

(5.6.9) What about going to the cinema?

Less formal/more informal

Form: e.g. Close modal/modifying verb form; Close Be + Do-ing Forms of the verb; polite tone.

(5.6.10) Can you.....?

(5.6.11) I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Formal

Form: e.g. Distant Did Forms of the verb; polite tone.

(5.6.12) Could you....?

Very formal

For example: when dealing with someone very superior in rank to oneself; when asking for something difficult/delicate.

Form: e.g. Distant Be + Do-ing Forms of the verb + distant modal/modifying verb; polite tone.

(5.6.13) I was wondering if you could possibly.....

If the request is rejected then as it was distanced no-one loses face.

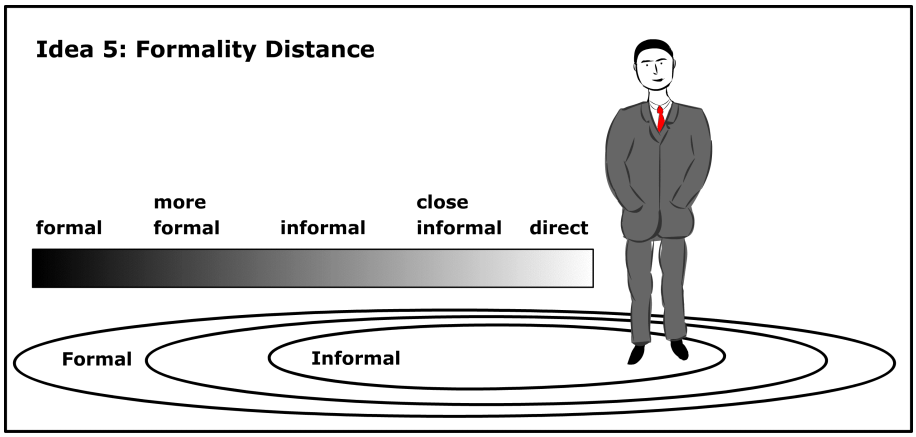


Figure 5.6: Idea 5 Formality Distance

What your learners need to know

- Formal distance is marked by Did Forms of the verb.
- Distance [or the lack of such] is marked on the first verb of a phrase.

5.7 Orientation Distance Summary

Tense use is about distance – not time. Time is only one dimension of the distance system – the most common use – but still only one aspect. If we focus too much on time, as traditional grammars do, then we create problems in the minds of learners when it comes to understanding and using the other distances.

The distances [excluding *us* vs *them*] can be diagrammed as in Figure 5.7. These *orientation distances* enable us to deal with all distancing by using one unified system of verb distancing - the tense system [as shown more abstractly in Figure 5.8].

Some of these distance ideas will be explored further in the first Meaning section of the grammar [Part Six] but now we will turn our attention to other instances of distance in English.

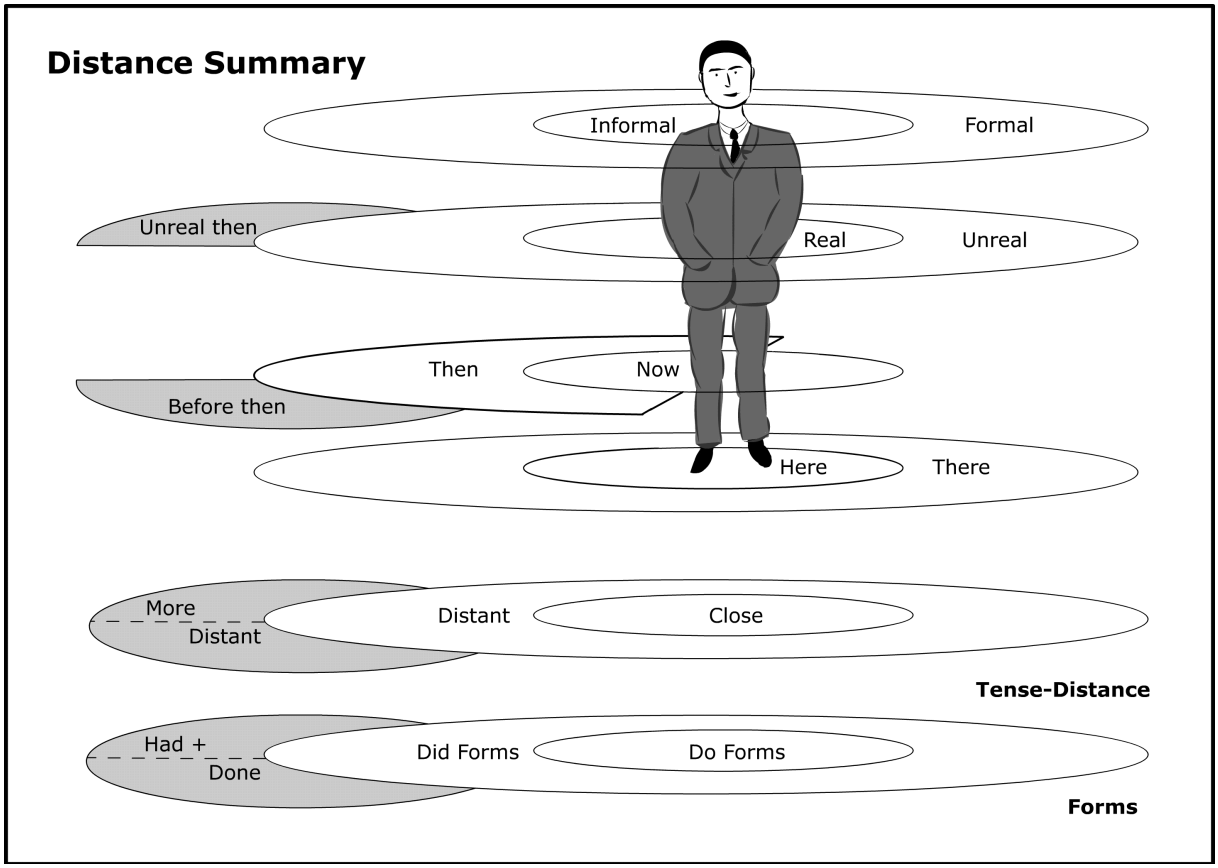


Figure 5.7: Distance Summary

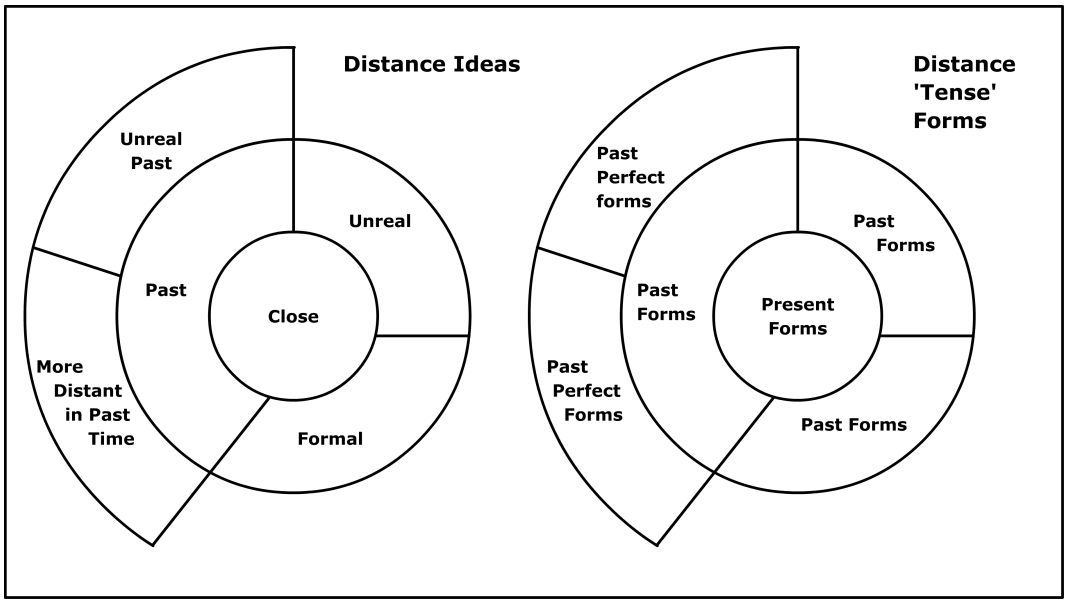


Figure 5.8: The Ideas and Forms of Distance

5.8 Manifestations of Deep Structure Distance

Distance is manifested in other ways in English, not just in the orientation distancing discussed above.

The Chemistry of English 1: Individual Words

Hoey (2005) suggests that sounds collocate to make words. The letters/phonemes in words are bound together in a similar way to how chemical elements can bond together. In chemistry two hydrogen atoms [2H] combine [through a chemical reaction] with one oxygen atom [0] to make water molecules [2H + O forms H_20]. In English, letters/phonemes combine to make words: *a + t + o + m*. The word *atom* can have further letters bonded to it e.g. *atom + i + c*. Most words, like *atom*, have internally strong bonds, which means that other words or letters cannot bond internally in the word: e.g. **atomxic*, though there are exceptions as we shall see later. The word is a stable compound of the letters/phonemes.

The Chemistry of English 2: Collocations

Just as letters collocate/bond into words, words themselves collocate. Like a repeating fractal pattern, letters bond to make words and words bond together to make phrases/clauses/utterances/sentences: e.g. *add two atoms*. In speech there are no aural boundaries between words; in writing the convention is to leave a space boundary between words. A stretch of speech or writing is a sequence of words bonded together as a sequence of conventional collocations: *You need to split the atom*.

This is the Associative Principle, which works in any language. The Associative Principle states, quite simply, that any word has associations with one or more other words in the language and these associations are meaning based. For languages like English there is also a Placement Principle which states that words are placed close together by the speaker/writer because of their associations. These two principles are the essence of the Associative Model of English. The Placement Principle means that the stronger the association, the closer the words should be. Some other languages also associate words together by mainly using the Placement Principle, while others use a combination of means to make the associations clear e.g. case endings and morphological inflections. English uses mainly placement, and some inflections.

In chemistry if you introduce another chemical element to a compound there might be a reaction and a new compound created e.g. sodium [Na] added to water [H_2O] produces [after an explosive reaction] sodium hydroxide and hydrogen: 2Na + 2H_2 O forms NaHO + 2H_2. Similarly, in English, if you add another word to the existing mix then it might bond with one of the words in the phrase: from *You need to split the atom* to *You need to split the hydrogen atom*. The bond between *hydrogen* and *atoms* is stronger than the bond between *the* and *atoms*, so *hydrogen* collocates with *atoms* and displaces the word *the* from its direct bond with *atoms*. The word *the* now encompasses both *hydrogen* and *atom*.

The sound changes which occur when phonemes combine into words and when words combine together to make phrases [e.g. elided sounds and the assimilation of sounds] are the sounds of the '*chemical reaction*' of bonding, like the explosion of sodium in water or the fizzing of a soluble aspirin dissolving in water.

Some words do not collocate in English, just as some chemical elements or substances do not react with certain substances [e.g. mercury does not react with glass - it just sits there or rolls around; oil and water do not mix]. The verb *Be* does not collocate with *been*:

(5.8.1) *I am been happy.

The figure below shows a visual representation of the bonding between words.

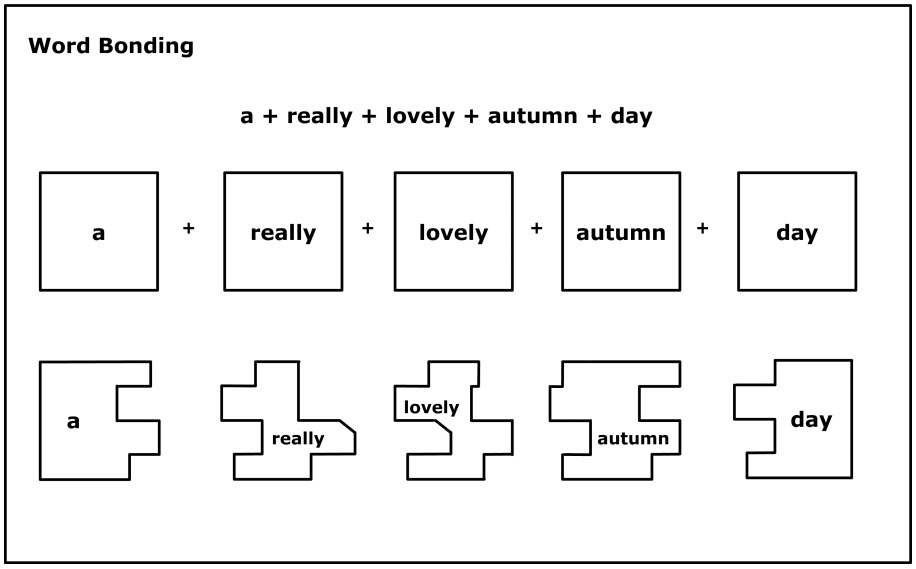


Figure 5.9: Word Bonding

It is not just a question of adding word + word. As the bottom row of Figure 5.9 shows each word has a conventional bonding pattern which restricts the words it can bond with. From the shape of the bonding pattern in the figure you can see that *a* bonds with *really* and *really* bonds with *lovely* etc. The words *a* and *really* cannot bond with *autumn*, and *really* cannot bond with *day*. The word *a* can bond with *lovely*, and *day*. The bond between *a* and *really* is a strong bond as the shape shows, while the bond between *a* and *day* is less strong as the other words have stronger bonds and can bond between *a* and *day*: the *a* and *day* bonding patterns do not match exactly. The three factors of the word form [or word class], the form meaning [if there is one] and the lexical meaning of the word determine whether a collocational bond is possible, and once a bond is established as conventional it is perpetuated by the speech community. A grammar which considers word form [e.g. as above in Figure 5.9: determiner + adverb + adjective + noun + noun] as the only factor in such word sequences is an incomplete formalistic grammar.

This chemical/word bonding analogy cannot be taken to extremes but it does illustrate the key idea of the relative strength of meaning relationships between words. Words bond together; this bonding is called collocation; the collocational bonds are of different strength and can be broken. Collocational bonds are one of the ways the Associative Principle is realised in English.

Collocational Strength

Word collocations can often move closer together through stages until they become one word - see Table 5.1 below.

Collocation	Linked with a hyphen	One word
open ended	open-ended	
	co-operate	cooperate
worth less		worthless
gentle man		gentleman
further more		furthermore
not with standing		notwithstanding

Table 5.1: From Collocation to Word

The collocation *worth + less* merged into *worthless*. The word *notwithstanding* is the end result of a process of the

words *not*, *with* and *standing* moving closer and closer together until they are fused and are an almost unbreakable collocation: there is zero distance between the words. Some words [like taboo words, expletives] can break into these very strong internal bonds: e.g. *not-expletive-withstanding*; *further-expletive-more*; *abso-expletive-lutely*.

In any utterance or sentence there are varying [aural or physical] distances between words. Collocational strength is represented in text by this distance between words in a phrase. A word may be near or next to one word and far from another and this reflects their relative strength of *meaning-connectedness*: the strength of their association. If words cannot be separated in a phrase then they are collocationally very strong [e.g. idioms and idiomatic phrases e.g. *'by the way'*; **by the right way*]. If they can be separated then they have a weaker bond, or there is a word which can be inserted because it has a stronger bond with one of the items of the collocation. The closer words are together in a stretch of English, the stronger their meaning relationship: the distance between them tells you the strength of their associative relationship.

Conventional English

Two of these three sentences below are conventional. Which?

(5.8.2) She was told to leave by John.

(5.8.3) She was told by to leave John.

(5.8.4) She was told by John to leave.

The second example is not conventional English - it uses English words but it is not an English sentence or utterance. The collocation *by John* cannot be separated by *to leave* [i.e. **by to leave John*] because of the strength of the connection between *by* and *John*. However, another idea [e.g. an adjective] could be added to that phrase e.g. *by stupid John*; the adjective is closer in *meaning connectedness* to the noun [*John*] than the preposition and so appears next to John in the textual chain. A noun [and an identifier] could also be inserted into the *by John* sense group in the same way: *by that idiot John*. Again, *that idiot* belongs next to *John* because of the meaning strength.

Our expectations from our primings can allow for some leeway in the order which some sense groups are presented and the permissible distance between them but this is constrained by the limitations of short-term memory. It is highly unlikely that this utterance would be said, and, if said, understood:

(5.8.5) She was told by that idiot John, who I met yesterday with his new girlfriend Susie, a beautiful girl, completely wasted on a guy like John, to leave.

This is all immensely important in the construction of comprehensible English sentences or utterances. *Words which mean together, belong together*. Words are placed together because of various considerations [like being collocations, for example, and for other reasons as we shall see shortly] which require or allow them to be associated. The bonds between the words are based on the strength of the *meaning relationship*. Words are also marked as being together in sense groups by punctuation e.g. commas, or by pronunciation – by the pauses which divides up the stream of speech into the individual tone units or chunks which make up speech.

One good example of all this is a key joke from the film Mary Poppins, which runs like this.

(5.8.6) A: I met a man with a wooden leg named Smith.

B: Really, what was the name of his other leg?

Adjective Order

The strength of meaning position can be clearly seen in the general order of adjectives where adjectives which are closer in meaning to the idea of the noun are physically closer to the word itself when written on the page or aurally closer when spoken.

(5.8.7) I love beautiful soft warm autumn days.

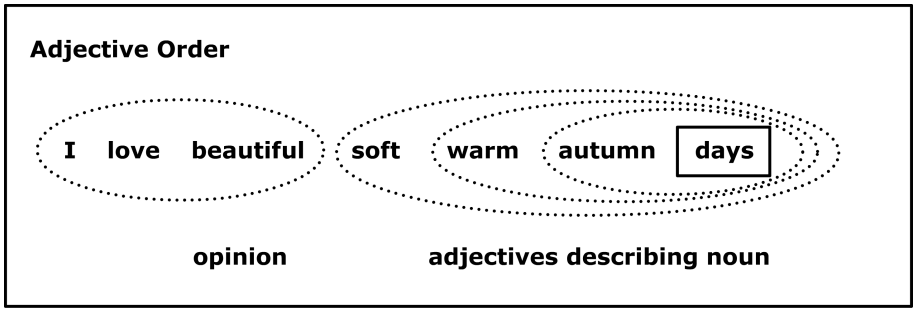


Figure 5.10: Adjective Order

The opinion that the day is *beautiful* is subjective [so belongs close to I] while *soft* and *warm* are more objective descriptions of the *days*, and *autumn* is the most defining word – it tells you which days – and collocates next to *days* because of its strong meaning bond. The enclosing circles on the adjectives part of the diagram show that soft is not just directly connected to the noun but encompasses the other adjectives as well. I do not say *I love soft days* but *soft autumn days* [not *soft spring/summer/winter days*] and more than that, *soft warm autumn days* - not *soft cool autumn days*. *Soft* does describe the noun but only through the other adjectives. *Soft* describes the *warm autumn days*. *Warm* describes the *autumn days* and *autumn* describes the *days*.

The order of adjectives gives us a conventional *pathway of choices* through to the noun. We move through the mainly predictable sequence [as outlined in Part Two] and choose which of the set of conventionally associated adjectives to use, and use them in their conventional position - like jumping from one stepping stone to another [missing out the ones we do not need or do not choose to use] to reach and, by doing so, define the noun. This is part of a larger pathway of choices for the noun. The verb also has a number of pathways of choice as we shall see later.

It should be noted that utterances do not usually contain such long strings of adjectives which pre-modify a noun as too much aural distance is created. The following example is more natural:

(5.8.8) I really like his new book.

The description *new* is a property of the book itself and defines which of his books I really like - not an old one.

In these examples the words appear next to each other in a way which demonstrates the strength of meaning between them and this helps us to understand the relationship between the words. Words are found together for a reason – their meanings are connected and they have to appear together to be understood together.

All these examples demonstrate that the closer words are together in an utterance or a sentence the stronger their meaning relationship is. Learners need to understand this so that they can process and produce written and spoken language effectively. When spoken, phrases are pronounced as chunks of words – as one unit. Learners need to be able to fluently produce accurate chunks of language with the correct word stress and intonation and pausing between chunks as appropriate. Effective fluency [as opposed to fluency without accuracy] is based on being able to produce these chunks properly in a stream of speech. Fluency = correct pause/chunk with correct word order, word pronunciation, stress, linking, assimilation, elision and intonation/correct pause/next chunk/correct pause. False fluency is characterised by grammatically incorrect speech spoken quickly - the rapid stream of speech can be used to hide inadequacies in accuracy.

While meaning-connectedness between words [represented by their relative closeness] is important in sentences and utterances, there are wider patterns from the distance/closeness deep structure of English.

Sentence Structure

In sentences/utterances as a whole, generally, the beginning of the sentence/utterance has the ideas which are closest to the speaker. The end of the sentence/utterance is [metaphorically] further away from the speaker – more distant. The traditional *subject + verb + object/complement [predicate]* sequence (e.g. *I like you*), which is an extremely common pattern in English, reflects this. Compare these examples:

(5.8.9) I needed help.

(5.8.10) *I help needed.

(5.8.11) Needed help I did.

The first example reflects the conventional word order which follows the underlying distance structure and most common information load patterns of English. The second example is non-standard. The third is less conventional than the first and more difficult to understand, and while it *can* be understood, if patterns like this are used too frequently they put a strain on the listener and the speaker will end up sounding like Ben Gunn, the slightly mad castaway from Treasure Island.

There have been a number of attempts to describe sentence and information structure based on the division of sentences into subject + predicate.

Tom has got married
Tom/has got married
subject/predicate
known/unknown
given/ new
theme/rheme
topic/comment

Table 5.2: Information Structure

In the example from Table 5.2 we know who Tom is; we didn't know that he'd got married. Tom is a known in the discourse: you and I know him. The new information is that he has got married. Tom is the theme or topic of the sentence; *has got married* is the rheme or comment. This is an important sentence-level pattern.

Theme to Rheme/Topic to Comment

The theme is the topic of the sentence and the rheme is the further comment on the topic. The topics of sentences in a text should follow logically one from one another, otherwise the text would be incoherent.

One pattern is:

> Volcanoes are usually large mountains built up by successive volcanic eruptions.
>
> Topic 1 [*Volcanoes*]/ Comment on Topic 1
>
> They are found all over the world on the edges of tectonic plates where the earth's crust is thin.
>
> Topic 1 [*They* = volcanoes]/ Further comment on Topic 1

Another pattern is:

> One of the greatest American writers is Ernest Hemingway.
>
> Topic 1 [*One of the Greatest American writers*]/Comment on Topic 1
>
> He was born in Chicago in 1899.
>
> Comment on Topic 1 [*Hemingway*] becomes Topic 2 [*He*]/Comment on Topic 2

Text is patterned in these ways to make the text coherent and easier to understand. These discourse patterns can *require* an active or passive sentence to follow to keep to the theme/rheme pattern - an example of the Discourse Requirements of the Associative Model. There is an underlying logic to texts because of these recognisable patterns and it is important for learners to be able to recognise and reproduce these patterns. At a textual level, then, understanding theme and rheme helps us understand and produce text.

Close/Distant

Generally speaking, sentences and utterances are weighted so that the key information comes towards the end. The topic is established early on, close to the speaker as it were and then information - a comment - is added,

distant as it were. Sentences and utterances are end-weighted. Readers and listeners expect the topic to be made known to them and to find out more about it. At this *general* level a topic is established as close and then distant information [known or unknown] is added to it.

(5.8.12) Tom /has got married.

This is a surface pattern of the distance deep structure of English.

Focus and Information

To change terminology slightly, *Tom*, in the examples above, can be seen as the Focus of the sentence and *has got married* as more Information about that Focus. Sentences and utterances consist of one or more Foci and Information about them. To make it slightly more complicated the Foci can also be seen as Information. These make three possible elements:

1. A Focus [obviously also Information - everything is information - but the Focus role predominates].
2. A Focus as Information: usually embedded in Information about another Focus.
3. Information about a Focus.

Consider this question and answer sequence.

(5.8.13) A: Who shot him?

B: John.

The answer, *John*, is both Focus and Information. If the answer had been *John did*, then the analysis would be Focus [*John*] + Information about that Focus [*did*]. The question itself is of the pattern: F1 [*Who*] + Information about F1 and F2 [*shot*] + F2 [*him*]. A Focus and Information about a Focus are usually associated in the text by being close to each other.

Let's look at a more complex example:

(5.8.14) Jack Ruby, a nightclub owner, shot Lee Harvey Oswald, the man who assassinated John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States.

The Foci/Information structure of this sentence can be diagrammed as shown in Figure 5.11 below.

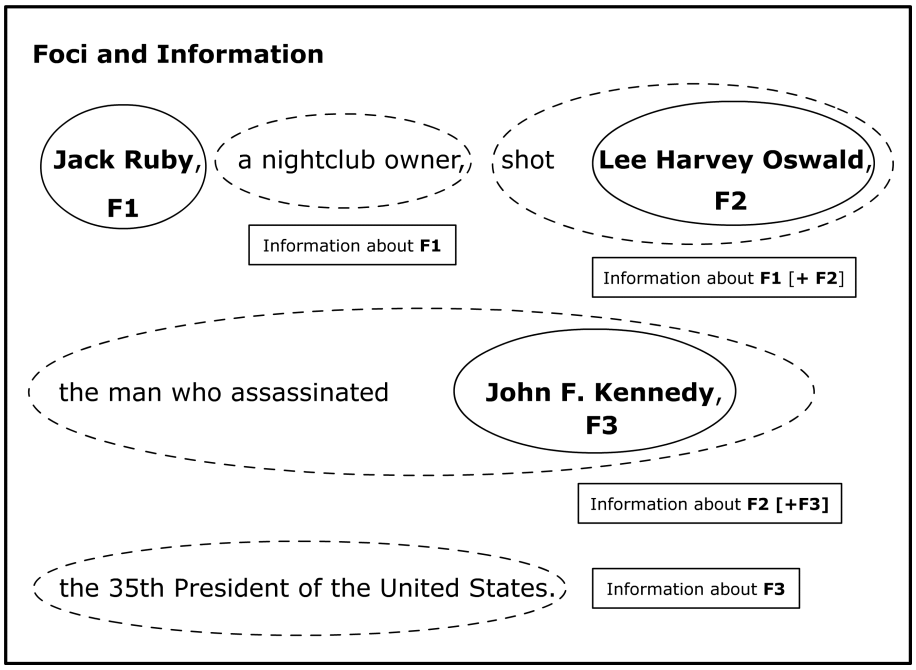


Figure 5.11: Foci and Information

Note that verbs can give information about more than one Focus [e.g. *shot*; Ruby shot Oswald] and that a Focus can be embedded in Information [e.g. Oswald and Kennedy]. Information about a Focus precedes or follows a Focus closely - a function of the distance system.

There might be other types of Information e.g. Structural Information which will tell us how the discourse is being constructed. This kind of information includes discourse markers, such as *however* and *although*, and co-ordinating conjunctions such as*and* and *but*. They still, though, contain information - about how the discourse is structured and developing. We can then add a fourth category to the three above: Structural Information.

Within the information phrase itself some of the information is *key* and this may be a new Focus or it may not. In the last part of the sentence in Figure 5.11, *the United States* is key information without being a Focus. It may be a focus but that would depend on what comes next. This takes us back to the larger patterns of text, beyond the sentence. The internal grammar of a sentence [or utterance] will depend on what came before, or if nothing came before then what is known to the speakers.

Figure 5.12 shows an analysis of a paragraph from a longer text from the Daily Telegraph newspaper published on the 15th November 2013 [http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/robcrilly/100246070], about Typhoon Haiyan.

Foci and Information Extended

For the *past four days*, **I** have been in ***Tacloban***, one of the *very worst affected*
[Info:**F1** K K K] **F1** [Info: **F1** + [**F2** = K]] [Info: **F2** K K K

regions. There is almost *nothing left* of **its *infrastructure***. There is *no water*, *no*
K] [Info:**F2** K K] **F2** [Info:**F3** = K] [Info: **F3** K K K

electricity, *no petrol*. For **journalists**, **it** meant a *torrid time* avoiding *downpours*,
K K K] [SI] **F4** **F5** [Info:**F4&F5** K K K

sleeping in *damp tents* and trying to *work out* how to *recharge laptops* and
K K K [SI] K K K K [SI]

satphones. For **locals**, who have *lost everything*, **it** means an *uncertain future* as **aid**
K] [SI] **F6** [Info:**F6** K K] **F5** [Info about **F6&F5** K K][SI] K

agencies warn of a *tide* of *disease* and *hunger.* And for those **charities it** means an
[**F7** = K] [Info:**F7** K K [SI] K] [SI] **F7** **F5** [Info:**F7&F5**

extraordinary logistical challenge to get *help* to *where* it is *needed*.
K K K K K K]

K = Key Infomation [in *italics*]
F1 = 1st Focus [in **bold**]
[SI] = Structural Information
[brackets show extent of element]

Figure 5.12: Foci and Information Extended

The Foci + Information analysis clearly shows how Foci and Information are closely connected spatially - by distance, or rather the lack of it. This analysis gives us a tool to understand the structure of sentences in a text. The level of detail could be taken further with a classification of the types of Foci and their dependent Information [are particular Foci characterized by particular kind of information?] or a further breakdown of elements: *aid agencies* is classified here as a unified Focus, but is it Information [*aid*] + a Focus [*agencies*]? In a pedagogical grammar such as this one, that level of detail is probably not necessary

Generally then, the *close known/given topic* Focus 1 is placed first and the *distant unknown/new comment* Information is placed next to it [in an Focus + Information cluster] where it can be understood because of the preparation or framing by the earlier close topic/focus. The sentence or utterance is weighted to its end with new or further information, either simply as *Focus 1 + Information* or as a more complex sequence of *Focus 1 + Information + Focus 2 + Information* or other variations. Sometimes, though, the speaker can violate these conventions and emphasize something by placing it at the beginning of the sentence or utterance for effect, as we saw with cleft sentences, fronting and inversion in Part Two. In each example above each clause is either a Focus clause or an Information clause or one which contains both.

Stress and Intonation

In spoken English [and when we read and pronounce the words in our minds as we read] stress and intonation are important for highlighting both Foci and Information. Generally speaking the key parts of the utterance [both Foci and Information] are stressed in the utterance. The Foci will receive prominent stress, as will the key Information content about these Foci. The content words [Foci and Information] tend to be stressed; verbs and prepositions etc. tend not to be stressed unless it is necessary to stress them and then they are highlighted by this stress as Key Information.

Speech is divided up into what are sometimes called tone units. These chunks of language are bounded by pauses. These pauses divide the chunk from other chunks in the same way as commas etc. in written English separate different clauses from each other, as we saw in the Jack Ruby sentence above. Within the chunk, words are closer or further apart, depending on their meaning relationship and words which belong together are said together in the same chunk, unless of course the speakers is pausing for dramatic effect.

(5.8.15) Friends Romans and countrymen. [One chunk]

(5.8.16) Friends/Romans/and countrymen. [Three chunks]

If an utterance is part of a sequence of utterances [a longer turn], then the intonation of the utterance and the pauses [sometimes almost imperceptible] at the end of the utterances will signal whether the pauses are continuing pauses [more is coming] or concluding pauses [it's your turn!].

In most non-contrastive tone units the largest pitch movement will be on the the last piece of information in the tone unit and it will help signal whether the speaker wants to continue their turn or to conclude it. Intonational rises often signal a continuation - either by the speaker [*on-going speaker turn*] or by you, the listener supplying the answer to a question posed by the first speaker [*on-going informational turn* - the speakers may change but the information idea continues - the question is answered, or not]. Falls often signal the conclusion of the particular utterance-idea sequence the speaker is saying, though the speaker may continue with another utterance idea sequence e.g. a change of topic. There are complications with this picture due to some variations in certain varieties of English e.g. with concluding rises [almost like questions] taking the place of concluding falls.

Intonation works with the grammatical and lexical content of what is being said to help the listener understand and respond appropriately. Turn-taking and interrupting depend on a sophisticated understanding of both stress and intonation and the content of what is being said, as well as body language and eye contact etc.

Of course, as spoken language happens in real-time, the Foci-stress and Information-stress highlighting occurs as an on-going process which reveals to the listener the unfolding stress and intonation contour. This sequence of stress and intonation are only clear retrospectively. We interpret the sequence as it happens in exactly the same way as we predict and process the incoming words of the word-idea journey we are on. The stress on the Foci and the key '*content*' parts of the Information about the Foci highlight these for us ['*pay attention!*'] and the intonation contour tells us about the journey we are on - e.g. is it continuing or concluding? Both stress and intonation help us understand the journey/message and as such are an integral part of the language system.

This discussion clearly shows that the simple, broad analysis of subject/predicate or theme/rheme of a sentence is an over- [but still useful] simplification and a grammar based on this simple binary distinction [subject + predicate] will not be able to describe the complexities of actual language in use in a convincing way. What is needed is a dynamic understanding of syntax as it unfolds: our active prospective grammar.

5.9 Distance Summary

The ideas of distance discussed here are simple yet powerful concepts. You can see that physical distance is at the heart of our existence and that this distance idea is reflected metaphorically in other ideas of distance orientation– *time*, *reality*, and *formality*, and the distance between words [the strength of meaning relationship], and the close/distant information loading within utterances/sentences because of the need to frame information and prepare the listener or reader so that they can understand it. Statements are generally constructed, on a large scale, as a close established [known] topic followed by a distant [new] comment. Within the statement are loci of Foci + Information. The whole underlying meaning framework [the deep structure] in English is based on the idea of physical distance and its metaphorical reflections.

Close things are more important than distant things. *A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*. *Close relatives* are more important than distant ones. So are *close friends*. A *close shave* is more worrying than something which *missed by a mile*. Some say *you should keep your friends close and your enemies closer*. *He is very close* is a kind of compliment. *He is very distant* is not. Yet while close things are most important, it is important to recognize that there are appropriate distances which need to be maintained and these are realized through the formal distance mechanism which, to remind you, uses exactly the same tense-distance idea as time and reality distances do.

Now let us examine Meanings in more detail.

6 Meanings 1

This section of the grammar examines nine key meaning-ideas which the learner needs to understand to make sense of the system of English grammar; it is Part 1 of the M of the G[DMC] system. Among these meanings are the *four cardinal perspectives* in English: *facts*, *on-going processes*; *the retrospective* and *the prospective*. These nine key meanings can be combined in certain conventional ways, using the conventions of the sequence, to build up more complex propositions, some of which will be looked at here, others in Part Eight of the grammar.

6.1 Idea 6: Here and Now: Close objective Facts: Do Forms

In English we can talk about states or actions as objective facts. These facts are true as we say them or write them and so they are close to us.

This idea of *close factuality* is the *first cardinal perspective* in English.

Realisation

(6.1.1) I live in Riga.

(6.1.2) My mother lives in Scotland.

(6.1.3) We are English.

(6.1.4) I am a teacher.

(6.1.5) She is a nurse.

(6.1.6) He studies English.

(6.1.7) She speaks Russian.

(6.1.8) I like you.

(6.1.9) We walk to work.

(6.1.10) They have three children.

Discussion

We represent some ideas about states and actions as being true objective facts *as* we utter or write them. The utterance time and the event/idea time are exactly the same instant so essentially these ideas are *independent* from time [Lewis, 1986] because they are about the factuality of the idea - the factuality at the moment of speaking – not about whether the ideas are true over a longer period of time. Time is just *not* important. The ideas just *are*. They are *close factual ideas*. The idea of *I like you* could change in the next instant to the idea of *I hate you*.

These facts *may* be generally true of a longer time period than the actual moment we say them [e.g. *The earth goes around the sun.*] but that is irrelevant to the central idea of the factuality of the statement as it is said. The key idea is that these facts are true as we speak. Their truth otherwise [e.g. *for all time*] is purely incidental and depends on the exact idea but because of this we can use the same idea – *true facts* – to talk about things which are generally true or to talk about habits or to make stories seem more relevant by bringing them closer to us. These are not meanings but functional uses made possible by the close factual idea.

Remember that these ideas are being *represented* as being objectively factual even when they are clearly not:

(6.1.11) I assume he is being truthful. [I assume, I do not know]

(6.1.12) She thinks she is right. [She thinks, she does not know]

It is factual that I assume [non-factual] that he is being truthful. *She thinks she is right* is different from *She knows she is right* but it is still factual that *She thinks.....* The lexical idea of the verb might be factual [or not] but it is presented as factual through its form meaning.

What your learners need to know

- We can talk about factual states or actions in English.
- We use the Do Form to do this.
- These are the forms of the Do Forms when used as the first verb in a phrase:

Singular	Plural
I like	we like
he/she/it likes	they like
you like	you like

Table 6.1: Do Forms

- When a Do Form is used in another position the *unmarked-for-person* form is used e.g. *be, like, go, make* etc. Except for *Be* this is the same as the first person singular.

These verbs have four ideas connected with them.

1. They are presented as being factual.
2. They are marked as close [by not being marked as distant].
3. The lexical idea of the verb e.g. *walk* [not *run* or *stagger* etc.].
4. The formal agreement with person by adding an *-s* or *-es* for he, she or it.

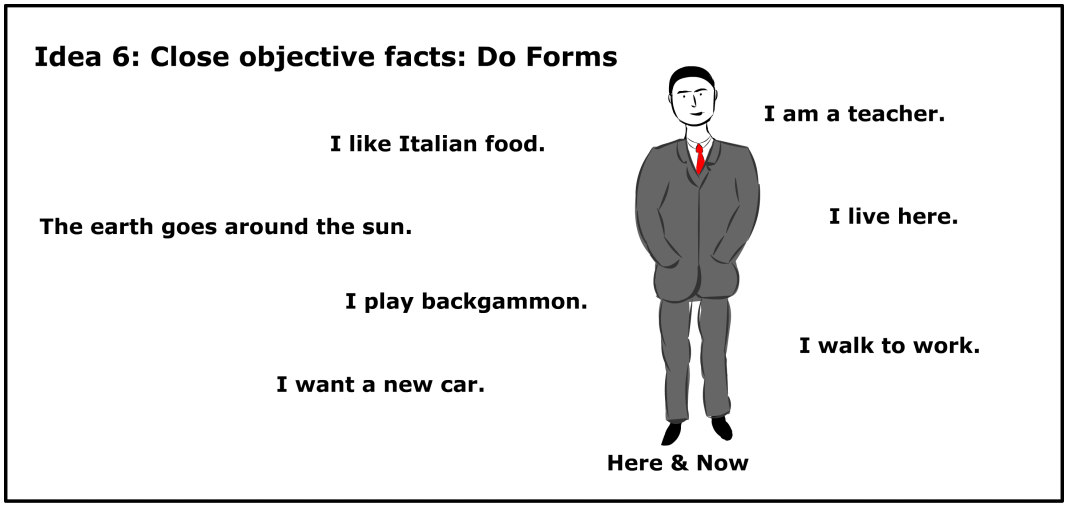


Figure 6.1: Idea 6 Do Forms

6.2 Idea 7: There and Then: Distant Objective Facts: Did Forms

Together with true close objective facts we can talk abut true distant objective facts as we saw in the Distance part of the grammar. These are exactly the same as true close facts but marked for distance.

We use the factual Did Form of the verb to distance the verb from us in our here and now. Precisely *which* distance is clarified by the co-text and the context as we will see in the examples below. When the distance is time distance the utterance time is *now*; the event/idea time is *then*: as understood or specified. When another distance is being stressed, e.g. formality or reality, the utterance time is now but the idea does not have a separate concrete event time: the distance dimension is *not* time.

Distance in time is only one use of this distancing mechanism, although it may be the most common and also the easiest to understand. So in order to regularize the description of the language the Did Form as a *distancing* mechanism should be stressed [with time as one distance, introduced as the first distance]. The language is absolutely regular but the traditional description is not and leads learners into error. Dealing in kinds of *distance* not *time* regularises the pedagogical description.

Realization and Discussion

(6.2.1) I lived in Tallinn for 4 years.

Lived: distant Did Form; *for four years*: time period. Nothing in the co-text suggests this sentence does not refer to past time therefore it *does* refer to past time.

(6.2.2) I went to eight different schools.

This is also past time: *went*: distant Did Form. The co-text of *school* concurs with the *went* form as I am over 40 years old and people usually go to school when they are younger.

(6.2.3) It's time I left.

Left: distant Did Form. The context *I am still here and I haven't left* tells us that it is *not* time distance I am talking about but rather I am using an unreal/formal [polite] distance signal that I have to leave very soon.

(6.2.4) If I were you, I'd look for a new job.

Were: distant Did Form. The co-text of *if* marks this sentence as being about some kind of possibility, distant from the current reality. The idea of *I being you* is an unreal idea. The distancing is continued with *would*. *If I were you* could be paraphrased as: *If it was true that I am you* [it is not true].

(6.2.5) If I went to Paris with you, I'd only be unhappy.

A future trip to Paris has been proposed but the speaker distances it with *if* and the verb forms to make it sound unlikely or even unreal [at least for the speaker] and although the future idea of going to Paris remains it does not have a real event time.

Tense equals distance

There are two tenses. The *close tense* and *distant tense*. Close tenses [Do Forms] are unmarked for distance. Distant tenses [Did Forms] are marked for distance and that distance [time, reality or formality] will be realised by the co-text/context or lack of co-text/context. This is a wholly complete and systematic view of verb tense.

What your learners need to know

- We use Did Forms to mark distant [in time] objective facts.
- We can also use it for other kinds of distance: *reality* and *formality*.
- The context and co-text help you determine which kind of distance is meant.
- If there is nothing in the context [the wider situation of a sentence or utterance] or co-text [the text immediately surrounding a word e.g. *if*] to tell you otherwise then you can assume that time distance is meant.
- Time is the default distance.
- Except for *Be* all the forms of the Did Forms are the same for each person.

Regular [example]	Irregular [examples]
I/he/she/it/we/you/they *liked*	I/he/she/it/we/you/they *went*
	I/he/she/it *was*
	we/you/they *were*

Table 6.2: Did Forms

Did Form verbs have three elements of meaning.

1. They are presented as being factual.
2. They are marked as distant by adding the suffix +ed or +en etc. or by a change in form [e.g. *go* to *went*].
3. The lexical idea of the verb e.g. *like* [i.e. not *love* or *hate* or *adore* etc.].

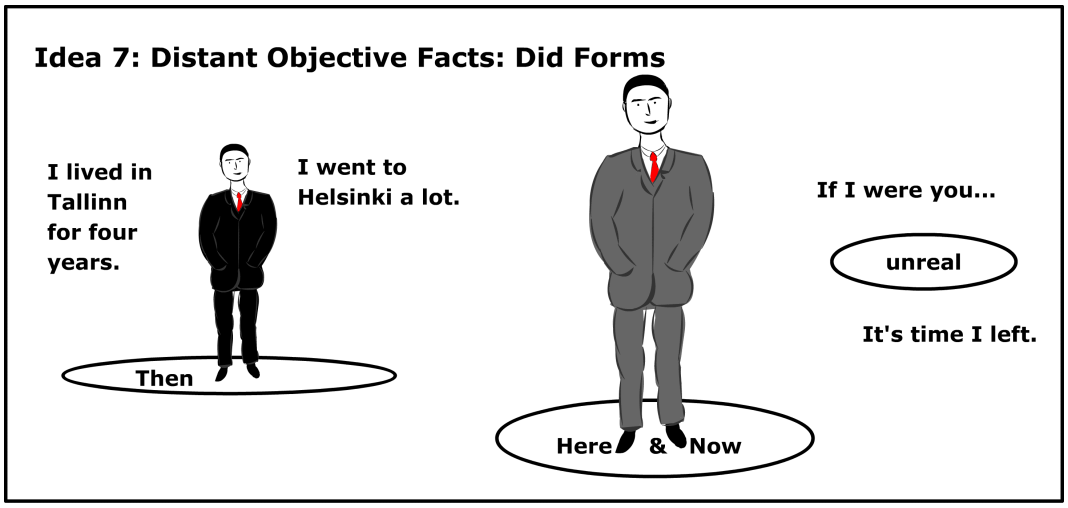


Figure 6.2: Idea 7 Did Forms

6.3 Idea 8: Marking a Condition: Be

We can mark ideas as referring to the specific factual conditions of people or things by using a form of the verb *Be* [Brazil, 1995]. This verb *Be* is a *subject condition marker verb*. It tells us that, in statements, what *follows* the form of *Be* is the condition of what came before the verb i.e. the subject. In statements it can be seen as a reflective verb as it reflects what follows back onto the subject of the sentence or utterance. It is essential to understand this point to understand passives. In questions, as we shall see later, it works in exactly the same way though the word order is slightly different.

Realisation

Close

(6.3.1) I am a man.

(6.3.2) She is a woman.

(6.3.3) They are very happy.

(6.3.4) She is very intelligent.

(6.3.5) We are in love.

(6.3.6) It is blue and green.

Distant

(6.3.7) I was in London last week.

(6.3.8) They were here on Tuesday.

(6.3.9) It was lovely yesterday.

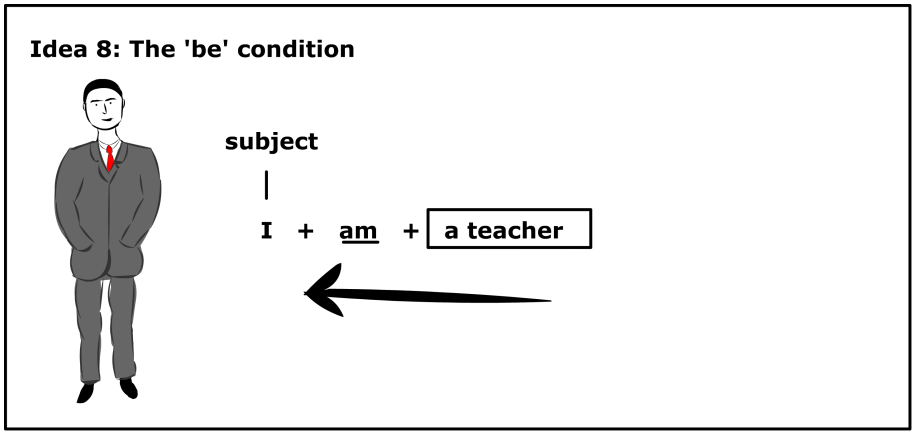


Figure 6.3: Idea 8 The Be Condition

Discussion

In each of these examples the *condition* of the subject of the sentences – *I*, *she* and *we* – is given after the verb *Be*. The verb *Be* marks that what follows - the *following condition* - is reflected back onto the subject. These examples are close examples [marked by *am*, *is* or *are*] – seen as being factual at the time of speaking – or distant factual [marked by *was* or *were*].

The verb *Be* tells us that a condition follows but also marks that following condition as being *close* or *distant*. When a condition is marked as distant then the co-text and context will tell us exactly what kind of distance is meant [note that here all the distance examples are time distant].

In this grammar we will not be making a distinction between *Be* as a condition marker verb and *Be* as an auxiliary verb. *Be* marks the condition of the subject There is no need to categorise any verb as an 'auxiliary': *be* is just *be*, the single most important verb in the English language.

What your learners need to know.

- The verb *Be* marks the factual condition of the subject of the sentence.
- Conditions are either described by nouns, adjectives or prepositional phrases, or are *done conditions* or *do-ing conditions* or more complex sequences of ideas as we shall see later.
- These conditions are marked as close or distant.

These are the forms of *Be*:

Close	Distant
be [pure unmarked form]	
I *am*	I *was*
he/she/it *is*	he/she/it *were*
you/we/they *are*	you/we/they *were*
Also: *been* and *being*	

Table 6.3: Forms of Be

6.4 Idea 9: Processes: Do-ing Forms

Imagine you are on a journey or reading a book. The process you are in has started but not finished. You started your journey earlier and are on the way to your destination. You opened the book and started reading but you have not reached the end of the book yet.

In English we can explicitly mark an action, state or condition as being a process or activity which has begun but not yet been completed. We can simultaneously be within many on-going processes or activities. This is the *second cardinal perspective* of English. Within this perspective there are *Do-ing Verbs*, *Do-ing Nouns* and *Do-ing Adjectives*.

Realisation and Discussion

Do-ing Verbs

Do-ing verbs are seen as factual (unless marked otherwise by the co-text and/or context) and can be marked as close or distant with a close or distant form of the condition verb *Be* or contextualised as such by the surrounding text.

(6.4.1) Turning slowly, he drew his gun.

In this example the process of turning is co-textualised as happening in the past by the subsequent (Distant) Did Form Verb: *drew*. Another way to frame the ideas in this sentence would be:

(6.4.2) As he was turning slowly, he drew his gun.

In 6.4.1 *Turning slowly* then seems to be an elided form but shows the pure do-ing idea of the form, as does the next example:

(6.4.3) Comparing these figures, we can see that we have a problem.

The activity of comparing the figures is stressed. This is different from: '*We compared the figures...*'

Do-ing Verbs are seen as being in process i.e. between the beginning and the end. They can be combined with the condition marker verb *Be* to talk about the on-going condition of the subject.

(6.4.4) Shh. He is sleeping. [in between going to sleep and waking up]

(6.4.5) It is raining very hard. [in between starting and stopping raining]

In these examples the close factual condition [which is marked by the verb *Be*] is the process/activity of sleeping or raining. Thus, in awkward paraphrases, the condition applying to him is one of the process of sleeping, and the condition of the moment is one of a process of rain.

The lexical idea of the verb adds important information to the idea.

Compare:

(6.4.6) He is painting the fence white.

(6.4.7) He is drilling holes in the wall to hang up our pictures.

(6.4.8) He is drilling a hole in the wall.

In the first example the process starts with opening the first can of paint and finishes when the job is done. He is in the midst of the activity. In the second example, the action of drilling is repeated but still belongs to a longer process between starting the job and finishing it. The repeated action is *within* the longer process. The lexical idea of the verb and the co-text [e.g. *holes*, *pictures*] tell us that the action is a repeated action as part of a longer process. In the last example, the drilling is not repeated because there is only one hole but he is still *within* the process of drilling that one hole: he has not finished yet.

Do-ing Nouns

We use exactly the same Do-ing Form as a Do-ing Noun to express the idea of such activities in general.

(6.4.9) Sleeping is good for you.

We use a Do-ing Noun Form because it marks the carrying out of the process or activity as important. In the following example there is a different idea expressed.

(6.4.10) Sleep is good for you.

Sleep is an abstract conceptualization of the idea. *Sleeping*, on the other hand, is the doing of the idea. Similarly, it is the *doing* of the process/activity which is marked in these examples:

(6.4.11) Summertime and the living is easy.

(6.4.12) Knowing me, knowing you.

(6.4.13) Wishing and hoping and thinking and praying.

Do-ing Verbs or Do-ing Nouns? Is it important? No.

Do-ing Adjectives

We can also use a Do-ing Form as a Do-ing Adjective to describe the condition of the subject marked by *Be*. In these examples the Do-ing Form describes the condition [marked as close or distant by *Be*] as an on-going activity/process.

(6.4.14) It is exciting.

There is a process of the creation of on-going excitement.

(6.4.15) He is boring.

He continues to bore me and this will continue until he suddenly becomes interesting.

(6.4.16) That was interesting.

I found it interesting.

Although the activity/process referred to in 6.4.16 is over we stress the on-going activity-effect because '*that*' [e.g. a film or experience etc.] produced an effect through the process. That was interesting *at the time*. It is not possible to say '*That was interested*' because inanimate objects etc. cannot have such a done condition.

Do-ing Adverbs

We should also note that Do-ing Forms can act like adverbs.

(6.4.17) She emerged screaming from the forest.

Given that the essential do-ingness of the activity is clear we shall not comment further on Do-ing Adverbs.

Which is which?

As an academic exercise you can try to decide if a Do-ing Form is a verb or an adjective.

(6.4.18) It is raining.

Is this a Do-ing Verb? It continues to rain.

(6.4.19) Shh. I'm thinking.

This seems to be a Do-ing Verb: I continue to think.

(6.4.20) It is boring.

Is this a Do-ing Adjective or Verb? I continue to be bored by this.

(6.4.21) She is exciting.

This seems to be a Do-ing Adjective because the information in the sentence is my opinion of her [exciting] reflected back on her.

(6.4.22) She is exciting me.

This looks like a Do-ing Verb because of *me*; this sentence also has a direction towards me: there is an effect on me.

(6.4.23) I'm writing a book about English grammar.

This appears to be a Do-ing verb: I continue to write and will probably continue until the task is finished or abandoned.

(6.4.24) They are closing the road.

This seems to be a Do-ing Verb: The road is not closed yet.

It is more important to consider the idea of the Do-ing Form [the same for verbs, nouns and adjectives] and the additional meaning supplied by the co-text rather than thinking of the correct label for the form of the word.

The Do-ing Verbs, Adjectives and Nouns express the same idea of the activity/process in progress and there is also a lexical dimension to the totality of the meaning.

Limited Duration

Some writers [e.g. Lewis, 1986] are of the opinion that *-ing* forms in continuous or progressive verb structures express the idea of *limited duration*. Because the idea of Do-ing is the idea of an activity or process in progress, Do-ing Verbs *can* be used to describe something of limited duration. This is implicit in the idea of an activity or process: a process or activity is usually necessarily of a limited duration, but you should be able to define *limited*. I can say both the following examples as I have a choice whether to see the idea of these sentences as just factual or in progress.

(6.4.25) I'm living in Jelgava.

(6.4.26) I live in Jelgava.

I have lived in Jelgava since 2006. I have no plans to leave at the moment. My choice of what to say depends on how I see the situation and what perspective I wish to present: either a fact or a process.

What is limited? Limited duration is not a very useful concept. Every person has a lifespan of limited duration - yet they *live*.

The idea of the Do-ing Form *stresses* that the process is *in progress*. The event time is within the process. Do-ing Forms are looking at a process from the inside, from *within* the process, between the beginning and the end. This is in contrast to Do Forms which look at an idea as being wholly factual *from the outside* and Done Forms which stress completion, viewed from the outside, as we shall see later.

Interrupting Processes

As a process is in progress it can be interrupted, which is why we often use a distant Be + Do-ing Verb Form (the traditional Past Continuous/Progressive) to talk about interrupted processes in past time.

(6.4.27) She was walking down the High Street when she saw him.

Extending Processes

If we look inside a process which takes a short time it can *seem* as if we are making the action longer: purely by looking *inside* the process.

(6.4.28) While he was turning the key in the lock he heard footsteps.

What your learners need to know

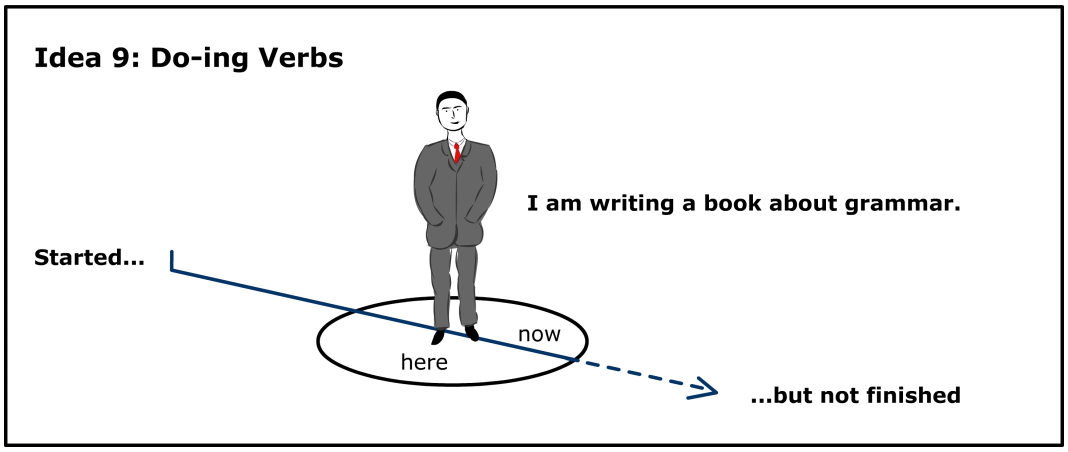


Figure 6.4: Idea 9 Do-ing Verbs

When you want to stress that an idea or action or state or condition as in progress or in process use a Do-ing Form.

- There are Do-ing Verbs, Do-ing Nouns and Do-ing Adjectives [and Do-ing Adverbs]
- Do-ing Verbs can follow close or distant Be Forms to describe the condition of the subject as in progress or in process.
- Your learners need to learn which processes/activities are conventionally described with Do-ing Forms.
- Some Do-ing Verbs lexically suggest repeated actions as part of a sequence which is in process.
- Do-ing Nouns are used to talk about the idea of an activity in general with an emphasis on the doing of that activity.
- Do-ing Adjectives are used with the condition marker Be to describe the subject as being within a process.

Also note that some Do-ing Forms can act as prepositions and, when they do, they do *not* have this idea of in progress e.g. *following* and *concerning* [Biber et al, 1999].

(6.4.29) Following the meeting, the CEO resigned.

In this example, *following* = after

(6.4.30) Information concerning us can be found on our website.

In this example, *concerning* = about

6.5 Idea 10: The Resulting Condition: Done Forms

In English we can express the idea that something is *done*. To do this we can use Done Verbs and Done Adjectives.

Realisation and Discussion

(6.5.1) Bewitched, bothered and bewildered am I.

When we express this idea we tell the listener that the action or event was completed. There is also an implicit result of this event completion – the *resulting condition* – but this depends on the lexical content of the verb.

We express these ideas using one particular form of the verb – the Done Form e.g. *gone; wanted; seen; thought; been* and, of course, *done*, the traditional past particle or third form. The Done Forms also include a number of forms used as Done Adjectives, words like *excited, interested, relieved* and *bored*.

The Done Adjective form is the same as the Done Verb and the meaning is the same. Look at this example. Is *closed* a Done Verb or a Done Adjective? Remember that *Be* reflects the following condition back on the subject.

(6.5.2) The road is closed.

In this example the Done Form seems more adjective like – describing the road – but it is impossible to label *closed* as either a verb or adjective and apply this consistently to all examples of this particular combination of *Be + Done form*.

Luckily this issue of word class is not particularly important [just like the classification of Do-ing Forms], except for those grammarians interested in such fine distinctions and, in a pedagogical grammar such as this, we are not. The idea of the Done Verb or Done Adjective Form in this case is the same: *sometime before now someone took an action which resulted in the road being closed*. After the completion of the action (after it was *done*) the status of the road is '*closed*' i.e. '*not open*'. The resulting condition is the same whether *closed* is an adjective or a verb: *the road is not open*.

The Done Verb and Done Adjectives express this idea: *something was done and there was/is a resulting condition because of this*. Let's look at some more examples.

(6.5.3) I am tired.

Something before now made me tired. This event or process is over but the resulting condition is that I feel tired. The process of becoming tired is over.

(6.5.4) He is dead.

The resulting condition of this completed process is that he is not alive. The process of dying is completed.

(6.5.5) The road was closed yesterday.

Yesterday, the status of the road was '*closed*', not open, because there was an action which was completed before – the closing of the road.

(6.5.6) The road was closed by the police.

Here '*closed*' seems more verb-like because of the co-text '*by the police*' but the essential meaning is the same – yesterday the road was not open because of the completion of the closing process.

(6.5.7) We are married.

A wedding took place in the past and the resulting condition is the state of being married. Verb or adjective? Is it important?

(6.5.8) I am come.

This archaic usage shows the same use of the Done Form [come – came – *come*] to show that my arrival has been completed and I am here now with all my regal authority.

(6.5.9) He worked for some hours, then, suddenly tired, he decided to rest.

Tired, describes his condition – a result of work - which prompted his decision to rest. The process of becoming tired was completed.

(6.5.10) Excited, the pirates started digging in the hard sand.

Here, *excited*, in a clause of its own, describes the condition of the pirates: something [finding the X which marked the spot?] made them excited. They were excited. *Excited* is the resulting condition of this something which had caused the excitement.

Note that most of these carefully selected examples use the verb *Be* [close or distant] to mark the done condition of the subject. The *closed* examples are examples of the so-called "passive", which are easily understood because of the reflection of the condition onto the subject by *Be* - the '*closed*' applies to the road because *Be* tells us that.

What your learners need to know

- We can express the idea of a completed action/process etc. by using a Done Verb and a [completed] resulting condition by using a Done Adjective.
- The distinction between a Done Verb and Done Adjective is almost always not really important.

6.6 Idea 11: What I Have is Mine: Possession

We talk about what we *possess*, *own* and *have* in English. These are Do Forms [but they can also be Did Forms] and are thus objective facts: I possess or don't possess; own or don't own; have or don't have.

Realisation and Discussion

The idea that something is mine and not yours is a really important idea in English. We can use verbs like *own* or *possess* to talk about this idea of what is ours but the really key verb is *have*. It is the second most important verb in English.

Have can be used to talk about things we have bought like we use the verb *own*.

(6.6.1) I own a holiday home in the south of France.

(6.6.2) I have a holiday home in the south of France.

It can be used to talk about things in our possession, under my control (or ownership) and not yours.

(6.6.3) This Picasso drawing is my most valuable possession.

(6.6.4) He has a very valuable Picasso drawing.

Yet it can also be used to talk about things we *have* but have not bought (unlike *own*) or things we *have* but cannot give away (unlike *possess*: we can give away possessions). The key question is what can we *have*?

We can:

have things or animals:

(6.6.5) He has a lovely house.

(6.6.6) I have two dogs.

have ideas and thoughts:

(6.6.7) I have an idea!

(6.6.8) I have no idea.

(6.6.9) I don't have a clue.

have people:

(6.6.10) I don't have any friends.

(6.6.11) I have three children.

have illnesses etc.:

(6.6.12) I have a cold.

(6.6.13) I have a headache.

(6.6.14) I have a temperature.

(6.6.15) I have a broken leg.

have hopes:

(6.6.16) I have high hopes.

have fun:

(6.6.17) Are you having fun?

(6.6.18) Let's have some fun.
have experiences:
(6.6.19) I have a lot of experience.
(6.6.20) Do you have any relevant experience?
(6.6.21) I had a very bad experience.
have a life:
(6.6.22) I have a life – I don't just work.
(6.6.23) He doesn't have much of a life.
have obligations:
(6.6.24) I have to help him – he's my best friend.
have responsibilities:
(6.6.25) I have to look after the children today.
have histories:
(6.6.26) He has a history of violence.
(6.6.27) They have a history.
have time:
(6.6.28) I don't have time I'm afraid.
(6.6.29) Have you got the time?
have events:
(6.6.30) I'm having a party on Saturday.
(6.6.31) We have dinner at two.
(6.6.32) Let's have a meeting.
(6.6.33) Let's have lunch sometime.
have money:
(6.6.34) I don't have enough money.
(6.6.35) Have you got any change?
have problems:
(6.6.36) We have a big problem.
have a job or work:
(6.6.37) I have a great job.
(6.6.38) I don't have a job at the moment.
(6.6.39) I have a lot of work to do.
have qualifications:
(6.6.40) I have a driving licence.
(6.6.41) I have a Masters degree.
(6.6.42) I don't have the right qualifications.
have an argument or row:
(6.6.43) They are having an argument.
(6.6.44) Let's have it out.
have an operation:
(6.6.45) I'm having an operation soon.

Have is a central and powerful word in the ideas of meaning of English. In all of the examples above there is a core idea of personal possession, for want of a better word. You possess [*have*] experiences. You *have* time – it is yours – you possess it. You possess an obligation to do something. You *have* a cold because the virus is biologically part of you. You *have* an argument because you are intimately involved in the creation of this emotional event. Learners have to quickly learn what we can conventionally *have* in English.

Have marks something as being intrinsically part of you or your existence in some way – either it is yours because you own it – like a car – or something mentally or physically part of you - like a memory or a bad back – or something joined with you in some way – like your family - or something you are creating - like an argument or a party - and this is extraordinarily important in English. This explains why *have* (and not some other verb) is the verb used for *retrospective forms* – traditionally known as perfect forms (the present perfect etc.) – as we shall see in Idea 12.

There is no need to distinguish between *have* as a lexical verb or auxiliary verb. In our prospective online grammar *have* tells you if it is close [*have/has*] or distant [*had*] + the lexical idea of possession of something yet to be said. What we can *have* is the key here.

What your learners need to know

- Very simply, your learners need to learn what we can *have* in English. All the examples above and more.

6.7 Idea 12: Retrospective Forms

From our here and now perspective we can look back into the past: *retrospectively*. This has been explored to some extent by Lewis (1986) but here we take the idea further. The retrospective perspective is anchored in the present. It takes our present situation as a given. The utterance time is now and the event/idea time includes now as well. It is different from looking at the past on its own, when the past is seen as something distant from here and now. *Distant then* is a completely separate idea from *now*. Here the past and the present are included in *one idea* – that of the past seen from the present: *before now* – and so therefore it is a close idea, not a distant one. *Before now* [which includes *now*] is different to *then*. *Before now* is the *third cardinal perspective* of English.

Realisation and Discussion

The main way we look back into the past from here and now is by combining two ideas – the idea of *have* and the idea of the Done Form.

1. Before Now

(6.7.1) I have been to Berlin three times to get a new visa.

When we combine *have* with the Done Form we have the powerful idea which can be paraphrased thus: *I possess, before now, from my here and now perspective [marked by have], the completion of some event, action or state which therefore has a done result [marked by the Done Form].*

(6.7.2) I have read all his books.

I possess [have; now] the experience of reading all his books in my past – my past *before now*.

(6.7.3) I have just finished.

I look back from now to a moment ago [marked by the co-text *just*] when I finished. This is one before now retrospective idea.

(6.7.4) I have never been to the USA.

I do not possess this experience in my past before the instant of speaking, so this is *not retrospective*: it has not happened before now. The same idea could be expressed thus:

(6.7.5) I haven't been to the USA.

Because the Done Form marks the idea of something done, it necessarily entails a retrospective viewpoint. You can only look back on something which is done. You *have* [possess, of now] + *Done Form* [completion of action/state: therefore *before now*]. The following unconventional example makes perfect sense despite the lack of the conventionally required *have*.

(6.7.6) *I done it.

Other examples following this unconventional pattern depend on the differences between the Did and Done verbs for clarity.

(6.7.7) I killed him.

This is seen as *distant factual* by default as the Did and Done forms of *kill* are the same. Both speaker and listener know the implicit past time reference of the death.

(6.7.8) *I seen him.

As the Done Form is used this has a retrospective idea and the listener understands this, even while making a judgement about the speaker from their lack of command of conventional grammar.

This *before now* retrospective idea contrasts with the *distant in time* idea:

(6.7.9) I went to Berlin last week.

When things are marked as distant in time there is no '*meaning connection*' with here and now. It is the distant form of the first cardinal perspective: a distant fact.

The *done before so we are looking back on it* idea is the whole idea of the retrospective Done Form. However, it is not the whole story as we have to consider the lexical content of the Done Form and the influence of co-text. These all work together to create additional meaning.

2. Before Now/Up to Now

As we have seen we can talk about things before now/retrospectively.

(6.7.10) I have lived in Tallinn.

The living in Tallinn - the experience - happened sometime in my life *before now*. I do not live in Tallinn now. If I did live in Tallinn I could express the idea in two ways:

(6.7.11) I live in Tallinn.

This is represented as a fact.

(6.7.12) I'm living in Tallinn.

This is an on-going condition/ process.

However, if we want to talk retrospectively about the place where we live *now* we need to add co-text [e.g *for two years/since 2006*] to add *more* meaning. The co-text adds meaning; the idea of the retrospective does not change.

(6.7.13) I have lived in Riga for two years.

In this example I look back *from* my here and now situation of *living here* to when I arrived two years ago and put these two ideas into one retrospective idea. Tomorrow it'll be two years + one day and so on but *up to now* it is two years. The length of time is complete to the instant of speaking [but it can be extended tomorrow and the day after].

I have [possession] + *lived* [completion: thus before now] + *in Riga* + *for two years* [a period which conventionally extends up to now with *have lived*]

This shows the power and importance of co-text in understanding meaning. This is a *before now/up to now* combination idea and is a result of adding the co-text idea *for two years* to the *possession* and *before now completion* idea of *have* + *lived*. The '*for two years*' extends the *lived* through this two year time period to '*completion now*'.

In the Tallinn example above, if I wanted to talk about how long I lived there [duration in the past] I would have to talk about the ideas as being distant as I no longer live there. Compare:

(6.7.14) I have lived in Tallinn.

This is a before now retrospective perspective.

(6.7.15) I lived in Tallinn for 5 years.

This is distant fact + duration in the past.

This avoids confusion about whether I still live there or not which could occur if I had said *I have lived in Tallinn for five years*, when I actually lived in, for example, Riga at the moment of speaking. The listener would misunderstand me and would think I still lived in Tallinn because the present retrospective is a present-based perspective.

One more example:

(6.7.16) Grey squirrels have lived in Britain for hundreds of years.

Grey squirrels still live in Britain and we can look back into the past from now to say that they have done so for hundreds of years. The squirrels, unaware as they probably are, possess this genealogical history: *Before now, up to now*.

Temporally 'Done': Before Now/Up to Now

This *before now/up to now* combination is a function of the lexical meaning of the verb [in the examples above: *lived*] and the co-text. These retrospective ideas can be done up to the moment of speaking and still [potentially] continue beyond the now. They can be temporarily '*done*' at the moment of speaking.

(6.7.17) I have lived here for three years.

In this example I am still living here and can reasonably expect this to continue barring some catastrophe. This is temporarily done.

(6.7.18) I have lived here for three years....and I am leaving today - hurray

This is completed. Done and dusted. The difference is in the co-text and the context - not in the verbs themselves.

These ideas of continuation [or not] are not part of the retrospective [have done] idea itself. They are a function of the lexical idea of the verb itself and the co-text. In English we can conceive of certain ideas as being done as of the moment of speaking and then still continue with them, and this depends on the lexical idea of the verb: *lived* can extend up to now [and be continued] while *read*, or *painted* etc. cannot.

(6.7.19) I have read your report.

(6.7.20) I have painted the room.

These are both completed; done; extension up to now [and beyond] not possible. These are just *before now* ideas.

We have the retrospective idea [*before now*] and the retrospective *before now, up to the moment of speaking* combination of ideas, which is possible when the lexical idea of the verb allows it, and with the addition of co-text. The *up to the moment of speaking* idea is because of the co-text *for 4 years* or *since 2009* etc. - it is *not* part of the retrospective idea itself.

(6.7.21) *I have read this book for 2 years.

This example is not conventional English: *have read* [unlike *have lived*] does not conventionally collocate with co-text *for 2 years* etc. The example below is different.

(6.7.22) I have been reading this book for 2 years.

The addition of the do-ing idea [*reading*] to the retrospective [*have been*] allows the *for 2 years* co-text and the *up to now* meaning to make sense. This is because all Do-ing Forms add the *on-going process* idea; here it is applied to the previous retrospective idea - which *can* therefore be seen as incomplete: *have* + *been* [done condition] + *Do-ing* [on-going process]. The *been* represents the retrospective completed idea but this is then modified by the following Do-ing Form. As *been* is a form of *Be* we know that what follows is the condition - in this case the ongoing do-ing of reading. While this sequence *may* be used to refer to something as incomplete it may not.

(6.7.23) I've been living here for 6 years. And I love it.

This is incomplete.

(6.7.24) I've been painting the hall all day and I'm exhausted.

Here the process is emphasised: is it incomplete?

(6.7.25) I've been painting the hall all day and I'm exhausted. Thank God that's finished.

Here the process is emphasised but the completion is from the co-text.

(6.7.26) I've been swimming six times this week.

Is this an incomplete activity sequence? Is the seventh time today?

Learning English

The typical example [below] of the *have* + *been* + *learning* + *English* + *co-text* shows how this combination of verbs and co-text works.

(6.7.27) I have been learning English for six years.

This kind of sentence is often used in a typical question and response sequence between teacher and learner:

(6.7.28) How long have you been learning English?

[I have been learning English] for six years.

In this example the response is: possessive *have* + retrospective done condition *been* + on-going process condition *learning* + *up to now*. The *up to now* understanding comes entirely from the addition of the co-text [*for six years*] - it is not an intrinsic part of the verb form meanings. However, we could imagine a different question with a similar answer.

(6.7.29) What have you been doing?

I've been learning English.

This response is: possessive *have* + retrospective done condition *been* + on-going process condition *learning*.

Other Lexical Distinctions

There are also important lexical distinctions between some verbs e.g. *been* and *gone*.

(6.7.30) She has gone to Paris.

This marks a retrospective journey to Paris – she is not here now and is on her way to or in Paris. She *departed before now*.

(6.7.31) She has been to Paris.

This is the retrospective condition of visiting Paris – the *visit* [the condition of being there: *been*] is complete: *before now*.

Not Retrospective

As mentioned above, the negative retrospective has the *not retrospective* idea i.e. *not before now*.

(6.7.32) I haven't finished the report yet.

As of now this is not retrospectivenot retrospective: the report is not finished.

(6.7.33) I haven't been to Cairo.

In this example I do not have this retrospectively viewed before now experience.

The Future Retrospective

With the addition of other ideas you can look forward into the future to a time point 'then', and then look back from then onto something from that perspective, as we shall see later.

The Distant Retrospective

You can look at something distant in the past and look back from *there and then* at something done (or not yet done) *before then*: *the distant retrospective*.

(6.7.34) My boss called me about the report last thing on Friday. Luckily I had spent Thursday night working on it and it was ready.

The idea here is exactly the same as the *close retrospective* [from here and now] except that we look back from a distant point in the past [*on Friday*] [signalled by *had* and the lack of anything in the co-text e.g. *if* to tell us that we are talking about anything other than time distance]. There is also the same distinction between *completed before then* and *temporarily done/ up to then* created by the retrospective idea and the co-text.

(6.7.35) I had competed the report before the deadline but then I lost it.

This is before then.

(6.7.36) I had lived there for 4 years before I found a good Indian restaurant.

This is before then; up to then.

Like the negative close retrospective the negative distant retrospective has the idea of *not retrospective*.

(6.7.37) I hadn't known her long before I realised I loved her.

(6.7.38) I left even though she had not finished.

(6.7.39) I left before she had finished.

Before she had finished = she hadn't finished.

The Distant Retrospective is used to make a sequence of distant in time events clear and adds a feeling of space between the two events.

(6.7.40) It was worse than she expected.

(6.7.41) It was worse than she had expected.

The second is clearly retrospective: she had expectations before the event.

(6.7.42) When I arrived she had done everything.

This is retrospective - everything was done before I arrived.

(6.7.43) When I arrived she opened a bottle of wine.

The sequence is: 1. arrived 2. opened.

The retrospective opens up a space between the two events to make the sequence clear. The *before then* idea of the retrospective clarifies the sequence of events by signalling a looking back at a completed earlier event. That is unless, of course, the co-text and the lexical idea of the verb combines to present the ideas of *before then/up to then*.

Possessing Something Done

The idea of looking back from *here and now* [or from *there and then*] at something completed which you *possess* is both easy to grasp and to use as a guide. Once you understand what we can possess [*a history, a broken leg, a cold* etc.] it is then a case of learning what kind of actions or events are talked about using these ideas – the conventions of the use of the retrospective form.

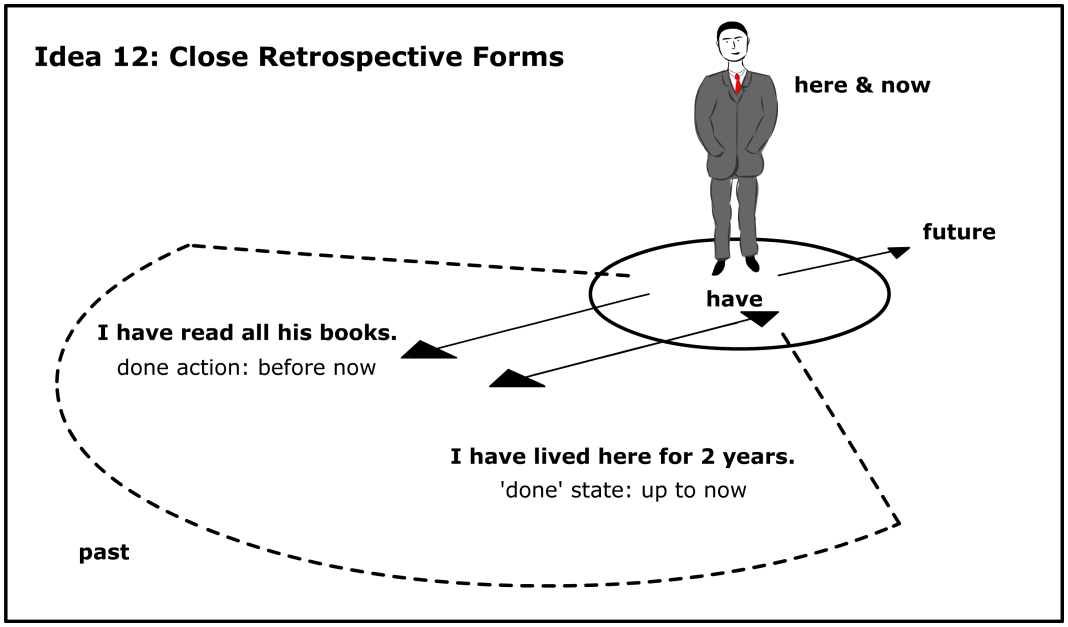


Figure 6.5: Idea 12 Close Retrospective Forms

What your learners need to know

Close Retrospective

- We can look back from here and now into the past.
- This is a *before now retrospective* perspective.
- We use *have* + a Done Form of the verb to do this.
- This is the *close retrospective* form.
- We can possess [*have*] an action or state completed in the past.
- This completion can be even up to the instant of now; signalled by co-text e.g. *for/since*.
- Even if the action has the potential for continuing it is seen as '*completed*' as of the moment we speak.

Distant Retrospective

- We can also look back from a distant point in the past to an earlier point in time.
- We possessed [*had*] an action or state or condition completed in the past [or up to the instant of the distant time].
- This is the *distant retrospective* form: *before then*.
- Note that this form can also be used for reality distance in the past – just like Did Forms can be used for different distances in the here and now [this was mentioned in Idea 4].
- With the distant [past] or future retrospective especially the use of the retrospective can create space between two actions.

Not Retrospective

- The negative retrospective has the idea of not retrospective: *not done before now/then*.

Plus On-going Processes

- We can add an on-going process idea to the close, distant and future retrospectives: *have/had + been + do-ing*. This *can* mean that the process is incomplete. The context/co-text will tell us whether it is incomplete or not.

6.8 Idea 13: Prospective Forms

From our here and now position we can look forward into the future just like we can look back into the past. The future, though, does not exist except in our minds and so the future is *entirely* seen from here and now. We make forecasts with varying degrees of confidence based on our knowledge, experience, desires, hopes and dreams. We look forward, *prospectively,* from here and now. This is the *fourth cardinal perspective* of English.

Realisation and Discussion

The future differs from the past. The past is distant from here and now. The future is not distant but is inextricably linked with our present feelings and thoughts as we speak or write. All future references are rooted in the speaker's now, or more objectively in a timetable, programme or appointment diary (written or mental), all of which assume that the world will continue on its current course uninterrupted by strikes by French air traffic controllers, earthquakes, runaway global warming, the death of the speaker involved or asteroids hitting the earth. We can only see the future from here and now and our view of the future can change as the present changes. This explains the saying '*The future is not what it once was*'. The future is in a constant state of flux which only resolves itself when it becomes the present. In a pedagogical grammar we can safely ignore such far-fetched quantum ideas such as there being an infinite number of universes reflecting the infinite number of decisions made by an infeasibly large number of people throughout history.

There is no grammatical future tense, in the meaning of an inflected verb form which is used to talk about the future, in English. As we saw in Part Three Challenges, *will* is not '*the future*'. The so-called *future simple* is not that simple and not about the future but about *the future seen from the present* – through the filter of *will*, [whatever *will* means] which we will discuss later.

The Do Future

We can, though, if we so wish, treat the future as, or pretend that the future is, a matter of fact and just use a Do Form.

(6.8.1) The next train is at 7.15.

If the world continues as it should [barring catastrophic events like those mentioned above, or more minor events like a points failure or the wrong kind of snow, if in the UK] then this will be true at 7.15. Because this idea is objectively factual we can use a Do Form [placed in the future by a future time reference] but remember it is still based on our here and now knowledge together with our probably reasonable assumption that the world will not change or end soon.

The Prospective to Future

Most of the time though we look forward from here and now into the future: to the future we see in our mind which depends on the facts of the situation as we understand them now. It is a personally objective future because it is based on our current knowledge and the ideas we present are *not* filtered or modified as we can do, as we shall see later. To do this we can use a Do Verb like *want + to + another Do Verb*.

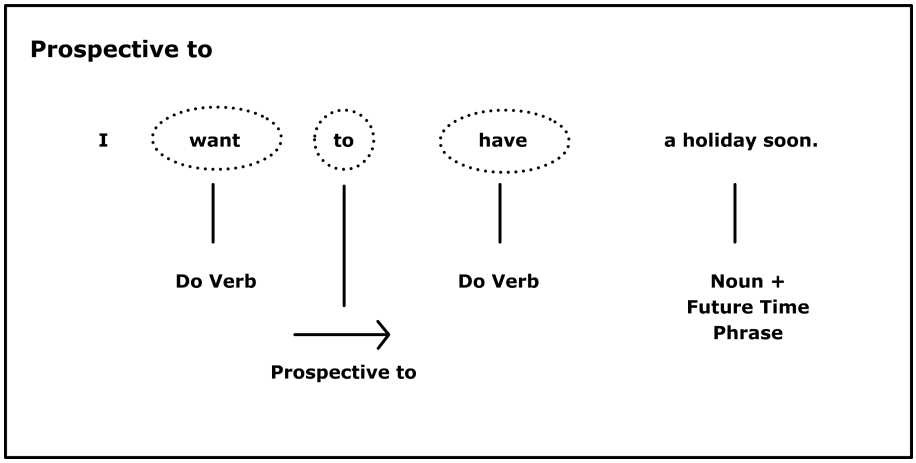


Figure 6.6: Prospective to

The *to* links forward from the first verb (which is close to us – in the here and now and marked as such by the word order) to a future event marked by a close Do Form. This second verb form is also close because it does not need to be marked as distant in any way. The *to* is not a *prepositional to* but a *temporal prospective to* and links the first verb in the sequence to the second.

Compare the example in Figure 6.6 above with:

(6.8.2) I want a holiday.

'*I want a holiday*' expresses a here and now fact *without* a prospective idea. It is a general factual statement.

We can look forward into the future using a prospective *to* with a variety of verbs e.g.

hope + to + do

like + to + do

need + to + do

have + to + do

love + to + do

expected + to + do

be + to + do

Have + to + do marks an objective factual necessity, perhaps an obligation, which you possess. It is seen as a necessity because it is something factual to do which you posses; it is not optional. Like *want + to + do* it is explicitly based on the current situation and looking forward to the future.

(6.8.3) I have to go.

Objectively I have no choice – it is not up to me.

(6.8.4) I want to go.

This is my personal desire.

Other examples from the verb list above include.

(6.8.5) It is expected to start soon.

(6.8.6) The shopping centre is to be opened in June.

All these examples of the prospective *to* involve looking forward from one here and now verb idea to another verb idea which comes after the first i.e. *in the future*. Or, if the first verb is distanced, to the future in the past.

(6.8.7) I wanted to leave but I couldn't.

We can use more than a Do Form after the *prospective to*. The *to* sets the stage for another verb sequence, which is seen as after the first verb.

(6.8.8) I hope to have finished this report by Monday.

(6.8.9) I expect to be leaving soon.

The Do-ing Future

There are other ways of looking forward to the future from here and now. We can use the idea of activities already in progress to stretch forward into the future.

(6.8.10) I am meeting Ilona tonight.

For this sentence to work logically as a real utterance, Ilona must know about our meeting. We have made an arrangement before now to meet. Therefore, the process has already started and will finish when we meet. The whole process – making an arrangement to meet, waiting until the time, going to the meeting place, meeting – is conceptualised in '*I am meeting...*' and the Do-ing Form idea extends to a precise time in the future – because it is marked by the time phrase. Remember that close Do-ing Forms have the idea of the utterance time being *within* the event time of the process. The time phrase co-text marks the end of the process.

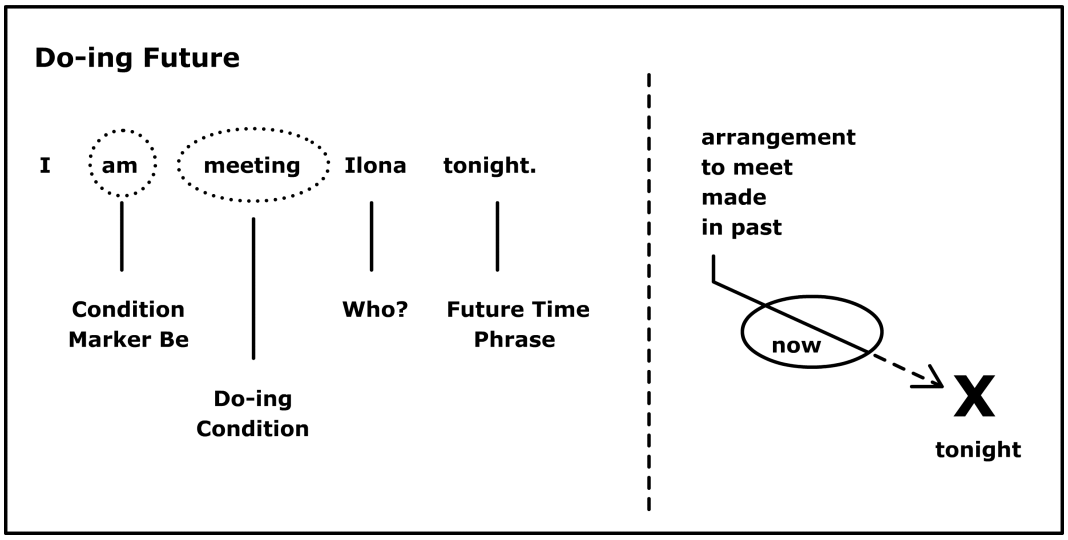


Figure 6.7: Do-ing Future

This combination of ideas [*Be + Do-ing + time phrase*] encapsulates the agreement before now and the time waiting and the meeting as part of one on-going [albeit seemingly discontinuous] process.

The Going to Future

The *Be + going to* future works in the same way as the *Be + Do-ing Form* combination with the *to* as a prepositional form or prospective temporal *to* depending on the meaning in the co-text [see Figure 6.8 below].

These examples combine two main ideas: the first is the close condition Do-ing idea of '*I am going*' which is indeterminate [unclear] in its precise meaning until '*to*' resolves the indeterminacy by adding the idea of linking forward to a future event or action: the Do Form – *have*; or *to* a place via a prepositional *to*.

Just Going

(6.8.11) I am going.

Close do-ing condition – process/activity = I am leaving: the process of leaving has started from the earlier decision itself. I decided [in the past] I am going and then I speak: I am *within* the process of leaving, even though I have not yet moved.

Going to Do: Prospective To

(6.8.12) I am going to have an early night.

Close do-ing condition – on-going process/activity: I am within the process which is moving forward *to* a future action.

'*I am going to*' can be paraphrased as '*I am planning to*' where the plan has been decided and initiated and we are in this process which is leading to the future event. The *going to* process is separate from the *have an early night* event so this is not the same *inclusive process* idea of '*I am meeting Ilona tonight*'. The *going to* process will end when I take the next action i.e. *go to bed*.

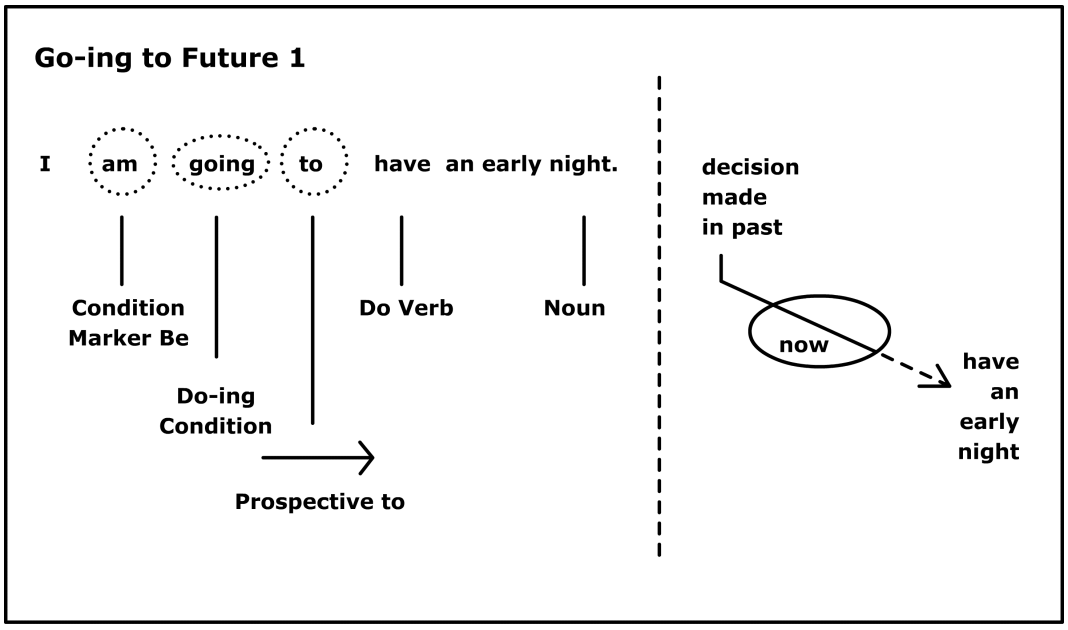


Figure 6.8: Going to Future 1

Going to Somewhere: Prepositional to

(6.8.13) I am going to the cinema tonight.

(6.8.14) I am going to Paris in May.

Both these examples are close do-ing conditions – ongoing processes/activities: I am within the process. However, *to* is a preposition of physical movement here rather than the prospective temporal *to*. Either way the idea is similar – movement.

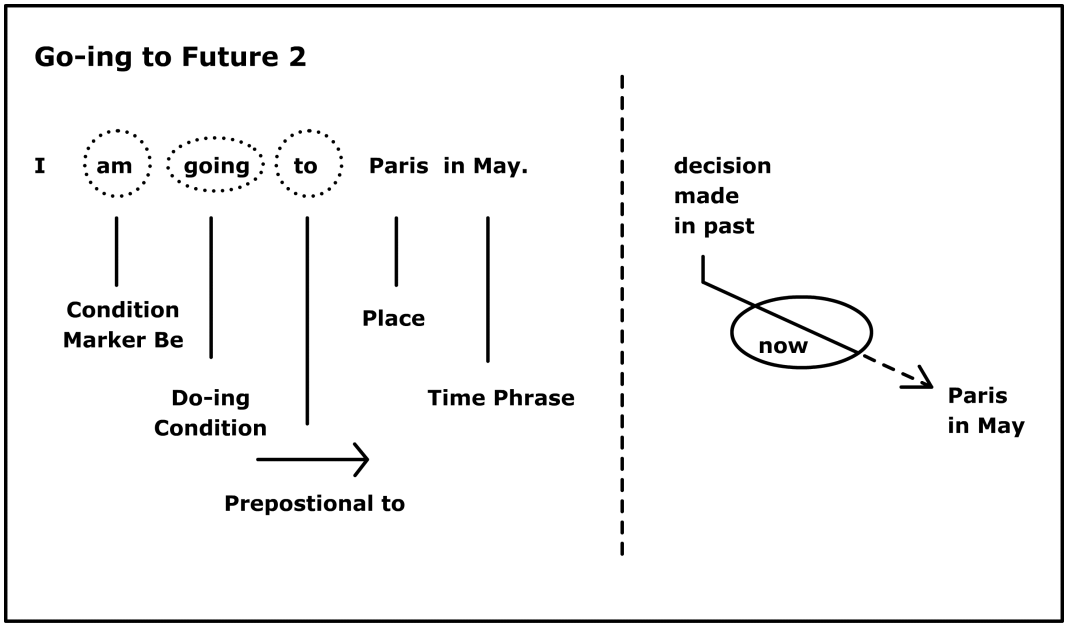


Figure 6.9: Going to Future 2

Other Futures

We can also look forward to the future through an explicit filter – using a modal/modifying verb (e.g. *will* or *might*) but this will be explored later.

Present and Future

The future is not independent of the present. There are no exclusive '*future forms*' as such. Most sentences concerning the future are not '*about the future*' but '*about the future seen from now*', which is an extremely important distinction.

The expected objective future as essentially grounded in the here and now situation and is a matter of looking forward to the future – prospectively – in a number of ways, either by pretending the future is a fact, by extending an already existing process in the future and/or looking forward with a prospective to.

The word '*to*' as in - *I want to go home now* - is a *prospective temporal to* rather than a *prepositional to*. The word '*to*' always has meaning – either movement in space [as a preposition] or movement in time [as a prospective temporal *to*].

What your learners need to know

- The future only exists in our minds.
- We look forward to the future from the objective and factual here and now.
- If we see the future as a matter of objective fact based on the objective facts of here and now we can use:

(6.8.15) [Do Verb] My plane leaves at 6 in the morning.

(6.8.16) [Do Verb + prospective to + Do verb] I want to marry you.

(6.8.17) [Do-ing Verb] I'm meeting John later for a drink.

(6.8.18) [Do-ing Verb + to preposition] I'm going to Estonia next week.

(6.8.19) [Do-ing Verb + to preposition] I'm driving to Vilnius in the morning.

(6.8.20) [Do-ing Verb + prospective to + Do verb] I'm hoping to leave at 5.

(6.8.21) [Do-ing Verb + prospective to + Do verb] I'm going to have a baby!

- Learners have to learn which verbs are conventionally used to express these ideas.
- We can also view these views of the future through modifying filters [e.g. *will* and *would*] and this will be discussed later.

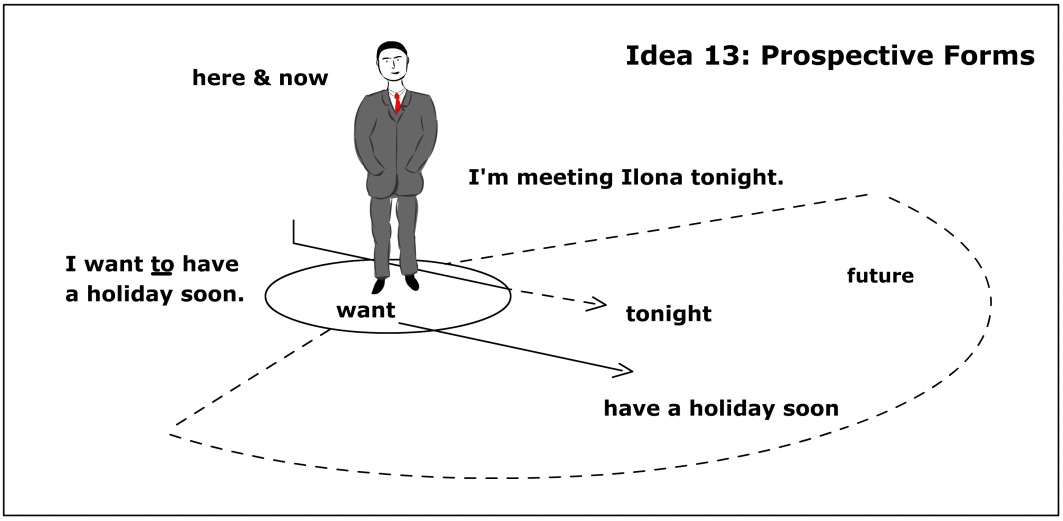


Figure 6.10: Idea 13 Prospective Forms

Note: prospective: a term taken from Lewis (1986) and Brazil (1995)

6.9 The Four Cardinal Perspectives

We have now looked at the four cardinal perspectives. These are *facts*, *on-going processes*; the *retrospective* and *prospective*. We use these perspectives from *here and now*, as shown in Figure 2.11 below, and these *here and now* perspectives are mirrored in past distance: *there and then*, shown in Figure 6.12.

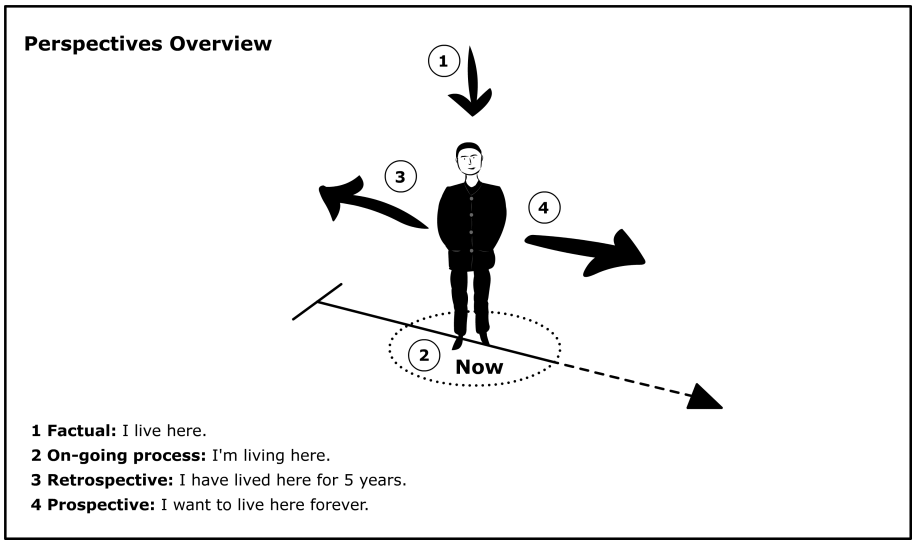


Figure 6.11: The Four Cardinal Perspectives: Now

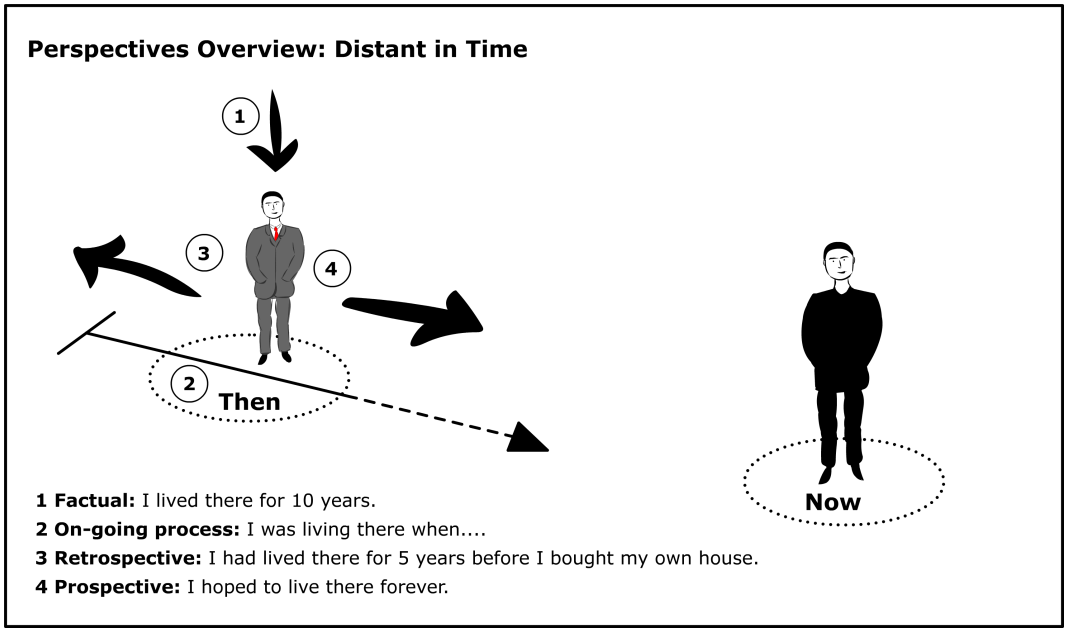


Figure 6.12: The Four Cardinal Perspectives: Past

As we shall see later these cardinal perspectives are further mirrored in the future, as seen through particular modal/modifying filter verbs.

6.10 Idea 14: Believe Me: Emphasizing the Truth

As we have seen, Do Verbs are essentially here and now statements of factuality and Did Verbs are expressions of distant factuality.

(6.10.1) [Close Do Form: *live*] I live in Jelgava.

(6.10.2) [Close Do Form: *have*] I have three children.

(6.10.3) [Distant Did Form: *lived*] I lived in Warsaw for 10 years.

We can emphasize the truth of these statements by adding *do*.

Realisation and Discussion

(6.10.4) I do live in Jelgava.

(6.10.5) I do have three children.

This *do* = this is true, believe me.

(6.10.6) I did live in Warsaw for 10 years.

This *did* = this was true, believe me.

In the last example the distant Did Form marks the distance (here: *time*) and emphasizes the truth so the *live* Do Form does not have to mark the distance. The first verb in any main verb sequence is marked as close or distant.

The *do/did + Do Form* stresses the truth of the statement. *Do* is a truth marker.

Interestingly the truth of Be conditions cannot be emphasized in this way. We cannot say: **I do am really hungry*. We have to use an intensifying adverb to emphasize the truth of Be conditions.

(6.10.7) I really am hungry.

This is true: Believe me I am hungry.

Another example is:

(6.10.8) I really am reading War and Peace.

Believe me.

This *really am* collocation contrasts with:

(6.10.9) I am really hungry.

The *really* intensifies the following word: hungry: *really hungry*, not just a little bit.

Placed at the end of the utterance, *really* would emphasise the whole utterance: *I am hungry, really*.

Negation

To make a factual statement negative we simply use *do* [truth marker] + *not* [negative] or *have* [possession] + *not* [negative] or *be* [condition] + *not* [negative].

These are interesting because of the way the negation is made.

(6.10.10) I don't drive.

I + close truth do + negative not + Do Form drive.

(6.10.11) I don't have a car.

I + close truth do + negative not + Do Form have possession + a car.

(6.10.12) I haven't got a car.

I + close Do Form have possession + negative not + Done Form got + car.

(6.10.13) I haven't got a clue.

I + close Do Form have possession + negative not + Done Form got + a clue.

(6.10.14) I'm not Latvian.

I + close Be condition marker + negative not + condition: Latvian

In each case the negation [*not*] comes after a *do truth marker*, a *have* for possession or a *Be* condition marker. A proposition must already be defined positively as being about truth, possession or a condition before it can be negated. Negation in English is marked after the verb which marks the distance and then applies to what follows. This is also true of *no negation*:

(6.10.15) I have no idea.

(6.10.16) *I no have idea.

In the so-called subjunctive negation is slightly different:

(6.10.17) It is important that I not be seen by anyone.

(6.10.18) It is important that I not owe anything.

In these cases the *not* comes before the verb.

What your learners need to know

- We can emphasize the truth of an idea by using *do/did* before the Do Form.
- The *do* or *did* emphasizes the truth and marks the closeness or distance of the ideas.
- To negate an idea we use *do/did + not + Do Form*; *have + not + Done Form*; or the appropriate form of *Be + not + condition*.

7 Meanings 2

In this second Meaning part of the grammar we examine the problematic area of modal verbs, which are here termed *modal/modifying verbs*.

7.1 Idea 15: People Have Interpretations of Events: Overview

People like to present ideas by filtering them though verbs which express the speaker's interpretation of the following objective facts. These verbs '*colour*' our understanding of the '*facts*' which are presented in the pathway. These filter verbs have meaning which they add to the idea of the following verb.

Realisation and Discussion

Such interpretations are made in English in two principle ways: lexically or by using a *modal/modifying verb*.

Lexically:

(7.1.1) I think that he's mad.

I *think* that this is a fact. You might not agree.

(7.1.2) Maybe that's true.

Maybe this is a fact. Maybe not.

Using a modal/modifying verb:

(7.1.3) He might be mad.

He (*I believe it is possible*) is mad.

(7.1.4) That might be true.

That (*I believe is possible*) is true.

Here, *might*, one of the modal/modifying verbs, modifies the close factual Do Form condition marker Be that follows so that the factuality of the Do Form is modified.

(7.1.5) He likes you. [Presented as fact]

(7.1.6) He might like you. [Filtered fact: my view of the fact]

Such modal/modifying verbs are always followed by unmarked Be or unmarked Do Forms [e.g. *be, work*]. The modal/modifying verb itself is marked for closeness or distance, so the Do Form which follows does not need to be [as we saw with the Do truth marker above]. Remember that the first verb in a main verb sequence or pathway is *always* marked or unmarked for tense-distance.

These modal/modifying verbs might more precisely be called '*personal subjective perspectives on the following factual, possession, process, prospective or retrospective ideas*' but, in the interest of brevity, '*modal/modifying verb*' serves to remind the learner that a subjective filter is being used, and the term links in with the current metalanguage term '*modal verb*', which, unfortunately, cannot just be abandoned as being hopelessly opaque for pedagogical purposes. Learners will need to be able to access other reference works so instead of replacing the term completely we will have to settle for modifying it.

The verb *might* [like all the modal/modifying verbs] is not marked for person with an '*s*' [unlike '*He is mad*': presented as a factually marked condition of he] because it is the speaker's opinion about him: *He might* [in my opinion] + *be* [factual condition] + *mad*.

Our new grammar focuses on a core idea [or in some cases ideas] which these verbs can be used to express. This principle idea allows the verb to be used functionally in many different situations. You teach the learner the idea and then they learn when to use it by looking at how it is used. You teach the core idea – they learn the functions through teacher-led presentations, or noticing, scaffolded as necessary by you.

Modal/Modifying Verbs and the Tense-Distance System

When we start a main verb phrase pathway we have four options.

1. Use a Do Form e.g. *do, [be] is/am/are, have, want, drive* etc.
2. Use a Did Form to mark distance of some kind e.g. *did, [be] was/were, had, wanted, drove* etc.
3. Use a Close Modal/Modifying Verb i.e. *will, can, shall, may* or *must* to filter the following sequence of verbs with a close idea.
4. Use Distant Modal/Modifying Verb i.e. *would, could, should* or *might* to filter the following sequence of verbs with a distant idea.

What your learners need to know

- Modal/modifying verbs mark the speaker's perspective of what follows from their viewpoint in the here and now.
- These verbs add meaning to the verb which follows.
- As they are filters through which we present our ideas of what follows they need to come first in the sequence – just like you can filter light before it goes through a camera lens to the film or sensor within the camera.
- There are a limited number of ideas which can be marked by these verbs.
- Learners need to know these ideas and know how they are conventionally expressed in English.
- They also need to learn how to use these verbs functionally.
- All modal/modifying verbs come first in a verb sequence because they represent the perspective of the speaker about what follows and as such are close to the speaker [a surface manifestation of the deep structure of English].
- They are all [un]marked for tense-distance – closeness or distance – through a pair of forms [again eliminating the subjunctive].

Close	Distant
will	would
may	might
can	could
shall	should
must	had + to*

Table 7.1: Modal/Modifying Verbs

**had + to* is used as the distant counterpart to close *must* because the distant *must* idea is objective not subjective as the past in this case is presented as objective and factual.

- As modal/modifying verbs are [un]marked for distance they are followed by a Do Verb.
- They are not marked for person [with '*s*'] because they are always about the speaker's view [or reporting a person's view].
- We can use these verbs to talk about the four cardinal perspectives: about [1] *factual here and now ideas*, about [2] *on-going processes*, about [3] *retrospective ideas* and about [4] *prospective ideas*.

- Two of these verbs – *would* and *could* – can be used to talk about objective distant [past] time while maintaining their core modal/modifying verb idea.
- The diagram below summarises these ideas.

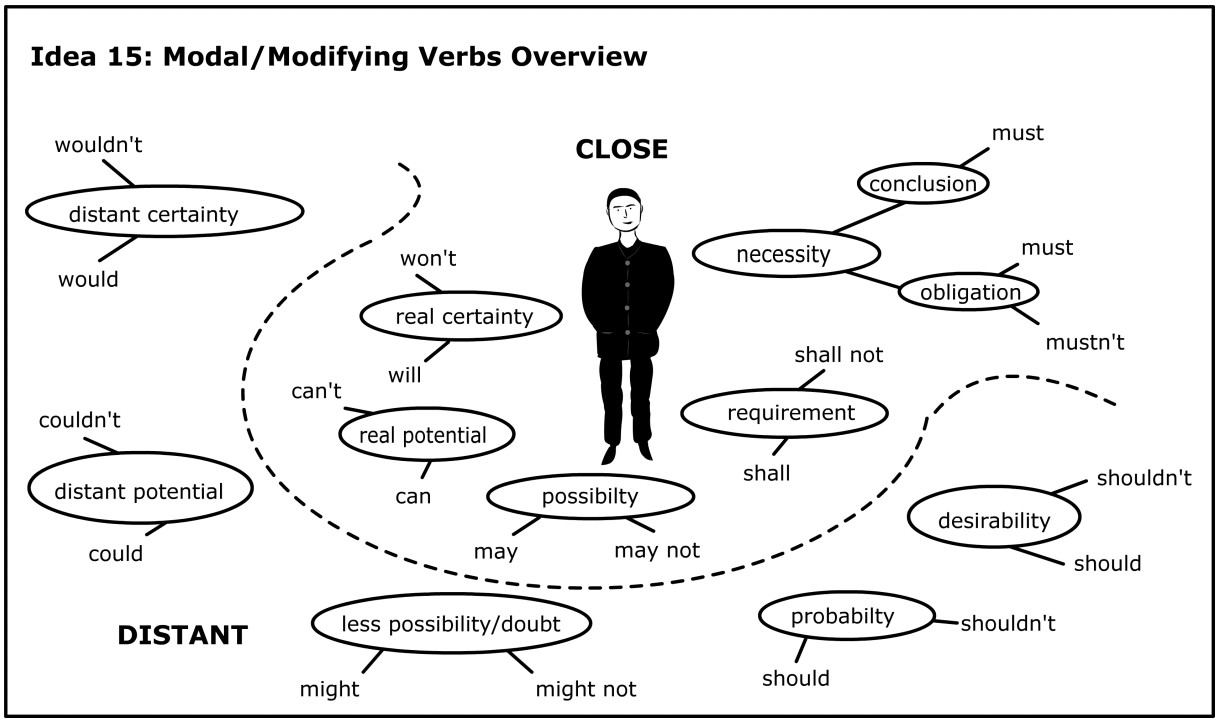


Figure 7.1: Idea 15 Modal/Modifying Verbs Overview

We will now examine the key ideas which can be expressed through such modal/modifying verbs.

7.2 Idea 16: Possibility and Doubt: May and Might

One idea which is expressed by these modal/modifying verbs is the idea of something being possible or, from a negative standpoint, of being less possible or doubtful. We use *may* and *might* to express these ideas.

Realisation and Discussion

Possibility and doubt are closely related ideas and they are best treated as one facet of a combined idea. Something is possible, but there are degrees of possibility – something can be *more* possible or *less* possible i.e. more doubtful.

X is possible. Y is less possible. Y is more doubtful than X.

(7.2.1) Possibility: *may*: There may be more than one right answer.

(7.2.2) Possibility but more uncertain/doubtful: *might*: That might be right.

Might is about doubt and thus is the more distant form of the two. As *may* and *might* are used to express possibility and doubt respectively they can be used in polite requests and offers and to give permission.

(7.2.3) May I borrow your pen?

Is this possible? Function: *polite request*.

(7.2.4) Might I borrow your pen?

I doubt that this is possible but I am still asking or I know this is a difficult thing to ask you. Function: *very polite request*.

(7.2.5) You may go now.

I am telling you that this possibility exists for you. Function: *giving permission*. Note that this function is now often expressed by the ideas of *can*: it is a changing convention.

These are polite formulations because of the elements of possibility and doubt. I don't presume that you are able to lend me your pen. I don't presume that you will go – I offer you the possibility. The more doubt that is expressed – by using *might* – the more polite the formulation. It is the idea of these forms – the idea of possibility and doubt – which allows speakers to use them for such functions as polite requests.

The formal response to a '*May I?*' request - '*Yes, you may*' – means that this is possible: It is possible for you to borrow my pen. Often this formal response is avoided by using a phrase like: '*Of course*' or '*Certainly*' or '*I'm afraid not*.'

However, the language conventions are changing with regards to *may* and *might* and *may* is becoming much less common. *Can* is being used more and more often for the function of making offers. In our less formal age the following paradigm is becoming more common:

(7.2.6) Standard, neutral offer: Can I help you?

(7.2.7) Formal offer: May I help you?

(7.2.8) More distanced formal offer: Might I help you?

Retrospective/Here and Now/Future

May and *might* can be used to filter retrospective, here and now and future ideas, in fact all four cardinal perspectives, seen from here and now. What follows *may* and *might* determines the perspective. Compare:

(7.2.9) That might be true.

(7.2.10) She might be here.

(7.2.11) I might be late.

(7.2.12) I am late.

The first and second examples are about here and now factual truth - there is no future idea. The third example has an idea of the future seen from now, which can be compared to the here and now fact of the fourth example where I know I am late. You can only be uncertain about your lateness if your lateness is in the future, so the 7.2.11 is about the future. Even though the verb grammar is exactly the same in the first three examples - *modal/modifying verb might + be* - there is a difference because of the co-text - *that*, *true*, *here*, *late*.

A retrospective example is:

(7.2.13) He might have killed her.

May not and might not

Many people do not feel or make a distinction between the relative strength of *may not* and *might not* in the examples below i.e. they do not feel one is more or less possible than the other. *May not* and *might not* feel about the same – they express the same likelihood of something happening and *may not* is probably becoming less common. I personally tend to only use *might not*.

(7.2.14) It may not happen – don't worry.

It is possible it will not happen.

(7.2.15) It might not happen – don't worry.

It is less likely it will happen/It is doubtful that it will happen.

(7.2.16) You may not do it.

In 7.2.15 is not possible for you to do it because I am not giving you the possibility. In this refusing permission use *might not* is not possible. This use is becoming much less common because of changing conventions: *can't* or *cannot* is taking over from *may*.

What your learners need to know

- We can express our subjective idea of possibility with the modal/modifying verb *may*.
- We can express our subjective idea of less possibility [or doubt] with the modal/modifying verb *might*.
- This is a more distant idea than *may* possibility.
- In the negative there is no real distinction between *may not* and *might not*.

We can use these verbs to give our opinion about:

Factual here and now ideas

(7.2.17) That may/might be true.

Compare with: This is true.

Prospective ideas

(7.2.18) She may/might have to go to hospital.

Compare with: She has to go to hospital.

Retrospective ideas

(7.2.19) He may/might have killed him.

Compare with: He killed him./He has killed him.

On-going processes

(7.2.20) She may/might still be working.

Compare with: She is still working.

On-going future processes marked by a time phrase

(7.2.21) I might be working next week.

Functionally: *may* and *might* can be used to make offers.

To make polite offers

(7.2.22) May I help you?

Compare with: Can I help you?

To make more formal offers

(7.2.23) Might I help you?

Compare with: Can I help you?

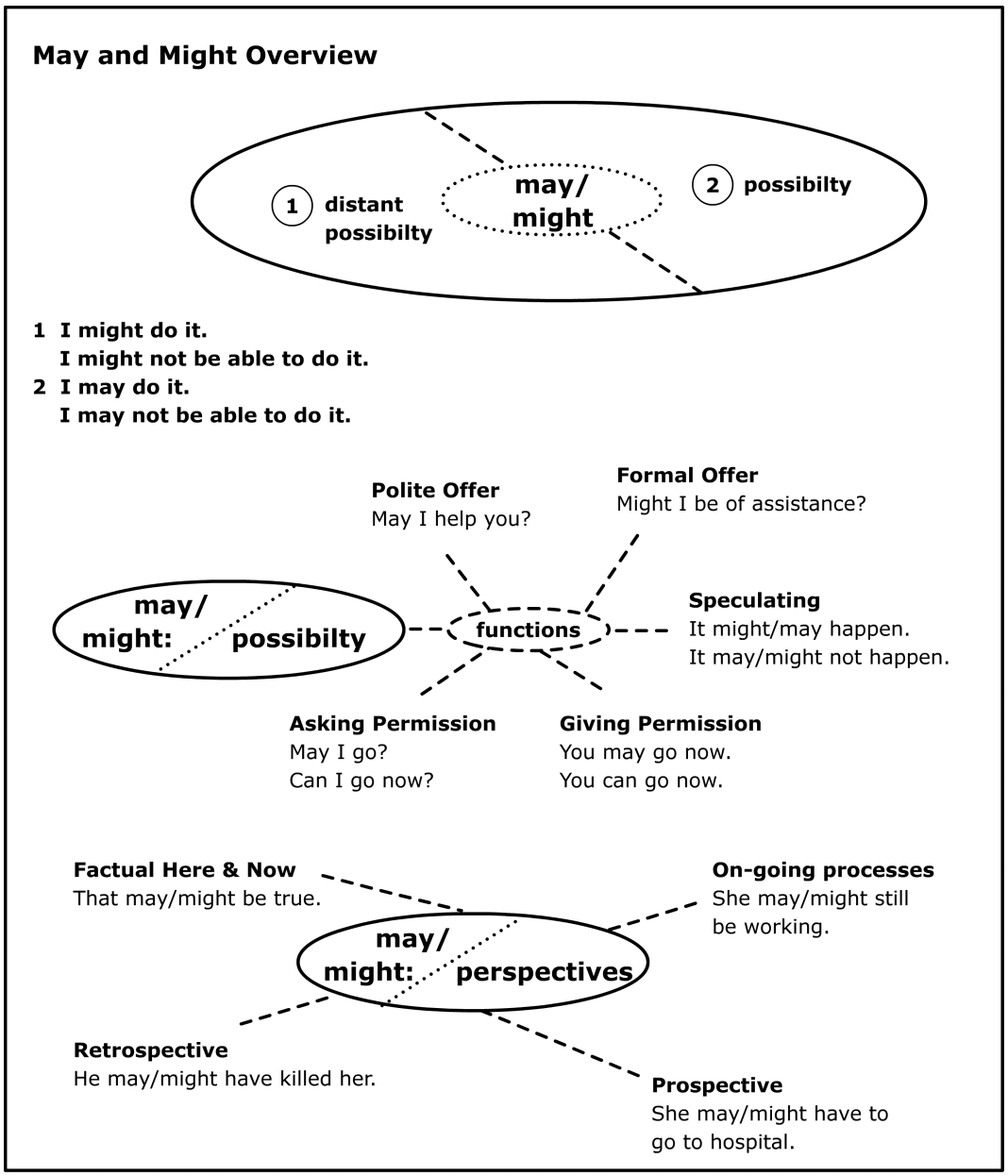


Figure 7.2: Idea 16 May and Might

7.3 Idea 17: Certainty: Will and Won't

While we can express the idea of possibility with *may* and doubt with *might*, we express the idea of close (here and now) *certainty* with *will* and *won't*.

Realisation and Discussion

(7.3.1) Certainty: will: It'll rain later.

(7.3.2) Negative certainty: won't: It won't happen.

Note that *'ll* is the unstressed neutral form. *Will* is the stressed formulation and is used when emphasis is required. Also note that *won't* [will + not] is the unstressed neutral form. *Will not* is the stressed formulation and is used when emphasis is required.

Will is always used from the speaker's here and now to express the *speaker's certainty* about the future, present or past [although only when viewed retrospectively, not as objectively distant].

(7.3.3) John will be late again I bet. He always is.

In this example the future late arrival of John is predicted here and now.

(7.3.4) (the doorbell rings) That will be Julie. She said she'd come over this evening.

Here the speaker expresses certainty about the present: The speaker is sure Julie is at the door now.

(7.3.5) Ilona: Someone called you last night but he didn't leave his name.

Robert: That'll have been Graham. He said he would call.

Robert expresses certainty about the before now past – seen from here and now. He is personally sure it was Graham who called. He looks back with [subjective] certainty to the past: [subjective] *will* + [retrospective] *have* + *been*.

Interestingly enough, the form *will* + *have* + *'third form'* is usually cited as the *future perfect* but in the Graham example above it is being used to talk about the past seen from now. This is a crystal clear example of the inadequacies of the traditional description and classification. The meaning of *will* + *have* + *Done Form* depends on the co-text/context. It can be used to express a retrospective idea from now or it can be used to express a retrospective idea from a future *then* seen from now, as in the next example.

(7.3.6) By the end of this year I'll have finished the book.

The '*By the end of the year*' co-text references a future time and anchors the event time of the verb phrase as being in the future. This time reference idea is then combined with '*will*' [certainty in the here and now] + *have* [possess] + *finished* [completed retrospective idea from future time reference point] for the whole meaning idea. See Figure 7.3.

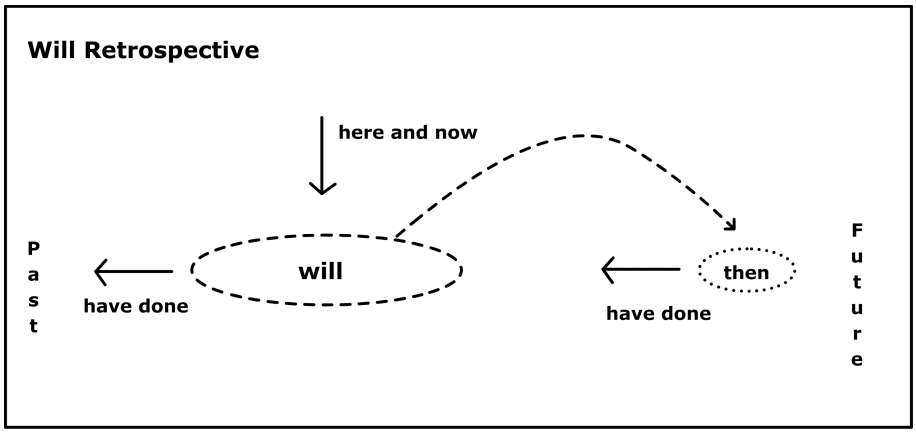


Figure 7.3: Will Retrospective

Certainty Functions

Because *will* and *won't* express the idea of personal certainty, they can be used to talk and ask about decisions, intention and willingness because these functions are based on the concept of certainty.

(7.3.7) OK, I'll do it. [Decision]

(7.3.8) I will call the police. [Intention]

(7.3.9) Will you be able to help me? [Willingness – are you willing?]

In each use of *will* or *won't* there is the idea of certainty. You can be certain I will do it. I want you to know with certainty that I will call the police. I want to know with certainty if you are able to help me. All these examples can be contrasted with *may/might* possibility/doubt rephrasings e.g. *I might do it*.

Habits

The idea of certainty is also used to talk about habits, which, because they are habitual, are bound to or are certain to happen. Habitual actions are an ongoing series of, perhaps unconscious, decisions to continue to do something [*I will do it.*]; a sequence which can be broken by another decision to stop [*I won't do it*]. Examples of *will* for habits:

(7.3.10) He won't listen to me.

(7.3.11) He will keep buying me flowers.

(7.3.12) He won't give up smoking.

In these three examples the certainty is about the behaviour being typical and continuing - because of the ongoing series of decisions to keep on doing these things.

Will and Might

Each example of *will* can be contrasted with *might*, for example. *Will certainty* contrasts with the doubt expressed by the possibility idea of *might*.

(7.3.13) I might call the police.

This is possible: there is an element of doubt in this formulation.

Some books try to place the verbs *will* and *may* and *might* etc. on a cline and say something like '*might is about 50%, will is 100%*'. This does not really work. Is *may* 75%? Why not 80%? Some might consider *may* and *might* to be about the same percentage. Who can tell? *Will* expresses the speaker's subjective here and now certainty - not a factual certainty. *Will* is certainty in the speaker's mind.

(7.3.14) It rains a lot here.

This is an objective fact.

(7.3.15) It'll rain more because of global warming.

This is a subjective opinion expressing the certainty of the speaker about the future.

Will is used to express subjective certainty about something – not objective reality. It is much better to see the ideas as discrete ones – factuality, possibility and certainty – rather than subjective positions on a cline. Pedagogically this then becomes a simple matter of applying three ideas – if you know something is [or want to present something as] objectively true or factual then you use a Do Form; if you are certain in your opinion about something use *will* or *won't*; if you have doubts then use *may* or *might* to express the possibility/doubt.

Note that using the term possibility rather than uncertainty for *may* and *might* avoids any possible confusion about the meaning of *won't*.

Will as the Future

Teaching *will* as '*the future*' creates lots of problems – the overuse of *will*; the under use of other modal/modifying verbs to view the future; and problems in understanding uses of *will* in the present and to view the past retrospectively, and the complete absence of the use of *will* in such ways. Let us be unequivocal: *will* is not '*the future*' (and never has been and never will be). *Will* is a filter through which the speaker expresses their

subjective here and now certainty about the retrospective past, present *or* future. The verb forms which follow *will* and the co-text determine whether you should understand a future reference or not. See Figure 7.4.

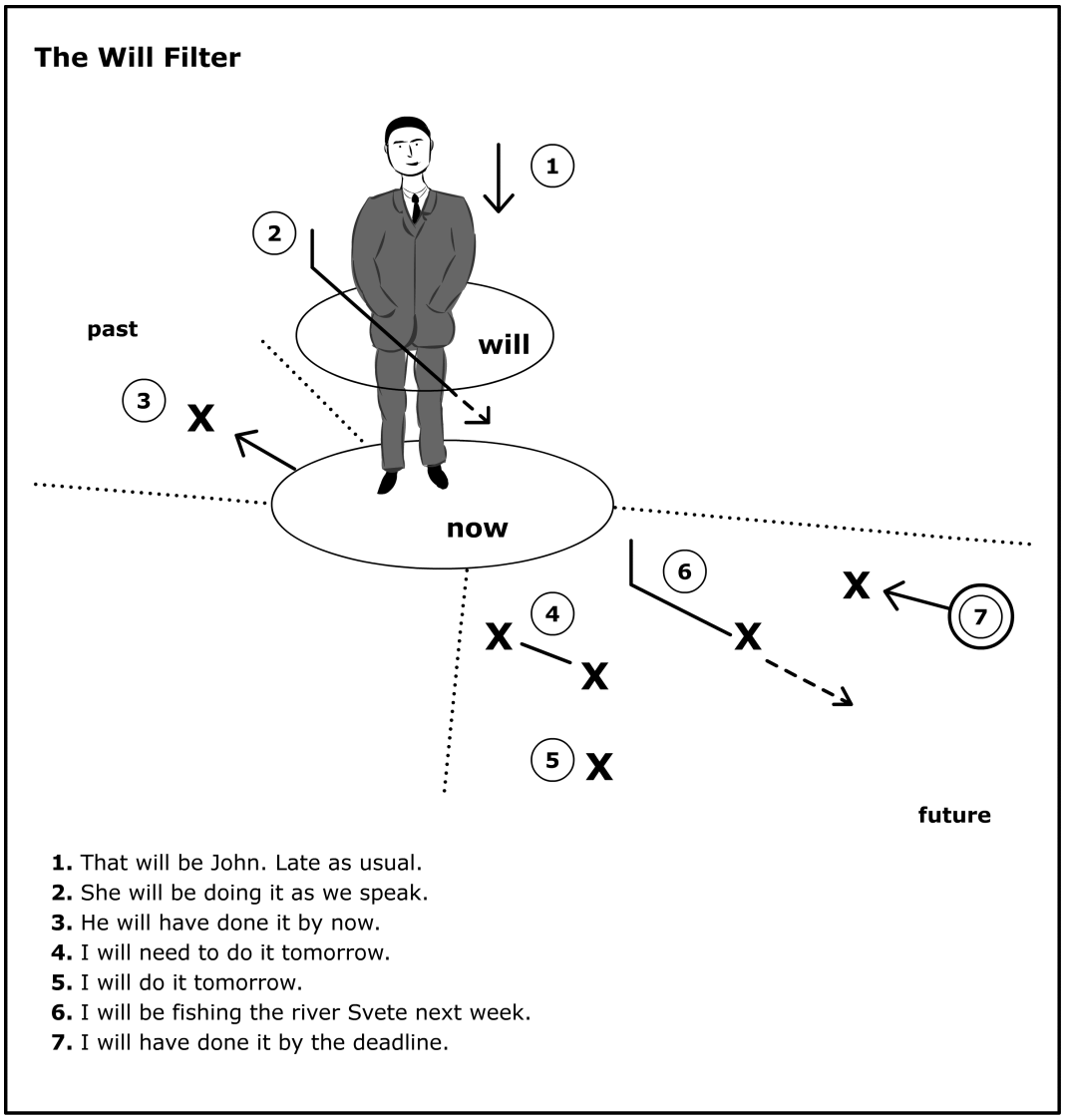


Figure 7.4: The Will Filter

What your learners need to know

- We can express our subjective certainty with the modal/modifying verb *will* and negative certainty with *won't*.

We can use this verb to talk about:

Factual here and now ideas

(7.3.16) That will be her.

Factual future ideas

(7.3.17) I will do it tomorrow.

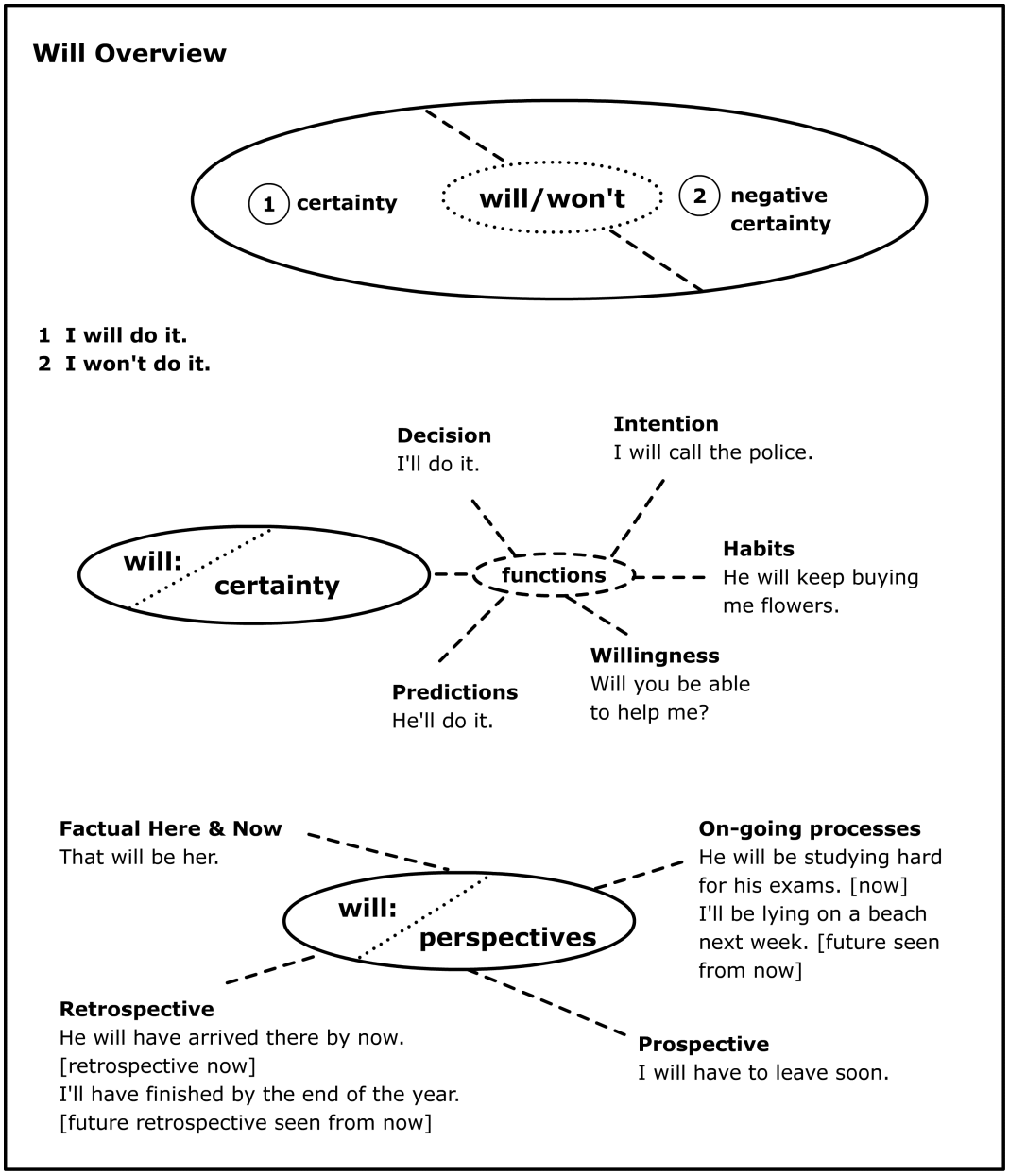


Figure 7.5: Idea 17 Will

On-going processes

(7.3.18) He will be studying hard for his exam.

On-going future processes, marked by a time phrase

(7.3.19) I will be fishing all next week.

Prospective ideas

(7.3.20) I will have to leave soon.

Retrospective ideas

(7.3.21) It's been raining heavily. They'll have got very wet.

Retrospective ideas from a future time point

(7.3.22) I will have finished by 6pm.

- The co-text, including explicit and implicit time references, tells us which perspective *will* modifies from our here and now.
- The verb *will*, like other modal/modifying verbs, is a *here and now* message about the following verb idea.

7.4 Idea 18: Distant Certainty: Would and Wouldn't

Just as we have *close certainty*, we have *distant certainty*. We use *would* and *wouldn't* to talk about an idea of certainty which is distant in some way [not just in time] from the reality of here and now seen from here and now. Both *would* and *wouldn't* work in the time, reality and formality distance fields.

Realisation and Discussion

Formal Distance

(7.4.1) Would you wait here please?

(7.4.2) Wouldn't you prefer to sit down?

Both formal distance: I am hesitatingly asking you or suggesting that you do something but I would like to be certain about it all the same. In the realm of formality, as we saw in Idea 5, there is a cline of degrees of formality; one based on relative formality, not one based on crude percentages.

(7.4.3) Wait here please. I'll see if he is free.

This example expresses: Do it, please. Neutral if said nicely.

(7.4.4) Will you wait here please? I'll see if he is free.

This example expresses the idea of *If you decide to do so*. It is more formal than the previous one.

(7.4.5) Would you wait here please? I'll see if he is free.

This example expresses a more formal idea of *If you decided to do so*. *Would* is more formal than *will* because it is more distant.

Reality distance

(7.4.6) I would like to help but I can't.

(7.4.7) I wouldn't do that if I were you.

Both express *unreal distance*: this would be certain in the unreal world where I can help you or I am you. This unreal distance operates with *would* in the past, present [as above] and future, seen from here and now.

(7.4.8) [Unreal in past] If I had gone to the party, I would have met her.

(7.4.9) [Unreal future] I would have enjoyed meeting you and Maria next Thursday, but I'm afraid I'll be away.

This last example, from Leech (2004), clearly shows how the forms combine with the co-text to create meaning: *would* [distant certainty] + *have enjoyed* [retrospective] + *next Thursday* [time phrase; future; anchors the retrospective], *but* + condition marker be + *adjective* + *will certainty* + *condition marker be*.

Time Distance

(7.4.10) When he lived there he would go for a run every morning.

(7.4.11) Pure factual: He went for a run every morning.

(7.4.12) When he was a boy he wouldn't let anyone play with his toys.

(7.4.13) Pure Factual: He didn't let anyone play with his toys.

All the examples above are in past time distance. The *would* examples are about certainty in the past. In these examples *would* has the idea of a repeated decision ['*I will do it.*'] made to do these things in the past. He was certain to do this in the past because of his series of decisions: *I will go for a run this morning*; *I won't let you play with my toys*. They contrast with the pure factuality of '*he went for a run*' and '*he didn't let..*'. This use of *would* emphasizes the decision and is factual because it is placed in the objective past [not the unreal past]. It is a different use from other uses of *would*, which are filters of the personal viewpoint of the speaker, but it still has the same meaning idea of *would*: *distant* [time] *certainty*.

In past time, *would* can be used in all four perspectives but they are not all factual as we shall see later.

Would and Used to

This use of *would*, the distant form of *will*, used to talk about past habits, discussed above, contrasts with *used to*.

(7.4.14) He would go for long walks every morning. [Actions]

(7.4.15) I used to go for long walks in the mornings. [Actions]

(7.4.16) I used to live there. [State]

Will and *would* are not used to talk about states because being in a state does not require an active on-going series of decisions to continue in that state. People tend not to wake up each and every morning and decide that after all it would be a good idea to continue living in their home. Past states and also actions can be expressed using *used to*.

Future in the Past

(7.4.17) He would go on to be very famous.

(7.4.18) Pure Factual: He went on to be famous.

The *would* examples stresses the certainty of what followed: his decisions and the circumstances led him to become famous and we know it happened. The close version would use *will* to look ahead from now to the future:

(7.4.19) He will go on to be famous.

This, however, is subjective because it has not happened yet. The *would* used in the examples above in the past is factual and objective because we know it happened. It is *distant in time factual certainty*, like the *would* past time action described above.

You have a choice how to represent this factual *prospective future in the past* idea.

(7.4.20) He survived the revolution and went on to be the Prime Minister.

(7.4.21) He survived the revolution and lived to be the Prime Minister.

(7.4.22) He survived the revolution and would go on to be the Prime Minister.

Would and, as we shall see later, *could*, can both be used in the Time Distance field. These are the only two modal/modifying verbs which can be used this way.

What your learners need to know

- We can express our distant certainty with the modal/modifying verb *would* and negative distant certainty with *wouldn't*.

We can use this verb to talk about:

Past Distance

Certainty in the past

(7.4.23) He would get up every morning at 4 am.

On-going process in the past

(7.4.24) He knew there would be no going back.

Retrospective in the past

(7.4.25) By 1954 he would have forgotten about the little girl he had met in 1906. But she hadn't forgotten him.

Compare with:

(7.4.26) By 1954 he had forgotten about the little girl he had met in 1906. But she hadn't forgotten him.

The second is factual [*he had forgotten*] while the first is not.

Prospective in the past

(7.4.27) He would go on to be Prime Minister twice.

Certainty in Unreal Distance

Unreal situations (present/future)

(7.4.28) What would you do if you won a million pounds?

Unreal situations (here and now)

(7.4.29) I wouldn't do a thing like that.

(7.4.30) I wouldn't be worried.

Unreal situations (past)

(7.4.31) I would have gone to the party if I hadn't had a lot of work to do.

Unreal on-going process (future seen from now)

(7.4.32) I would be going on holiday tomorrow if it weren't for the fact that I have this report to finish.

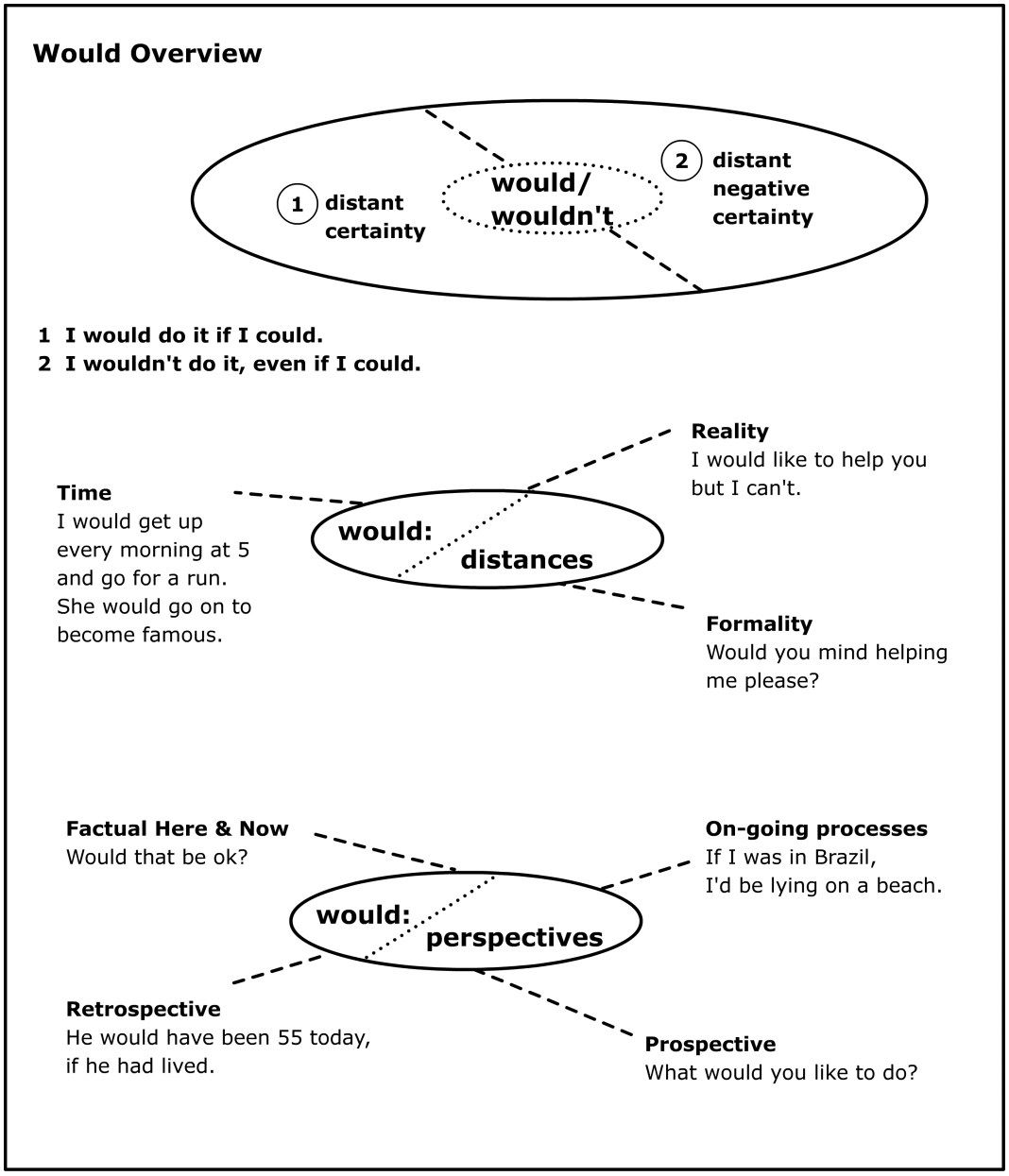


Figure 7.6: Idea 18 Would

Certainty in Formal Situations

(7.4.33) Would you like another drink?

(7.4.34) If you would be so kind.

(7.4.35) Would that be ok?

7.5 Idea 19: Real Potential: Can and Can't

We can talk about the *real potential* of something happening or our *real potential of being able to do* something. This doesn't mean that these things actually happen, merely that we state that the real potential for action is there or not. We use *can* and *can't* to do this.

Realisation and Discussion

The statement - *I can do it* - means I have the potential [the knowledge, skills, strength etc.] to do it. It doesn't mean I *do* do it, though I might.

This idea of *real potential* is similar to an objective statement of the condition of being capable of doing something: e.g. *I am able to do it*. These are synonyms and as we remember they will not be exact synonyms [because there are none in English] and their range will be different. We wouldn't be able to express all the ideas of *can real potential* if we just had the *be able to do* formulation.

Figure 7.7 shows *can real potential* compared with to *be able to*. The numbers relate to the sections which follow.

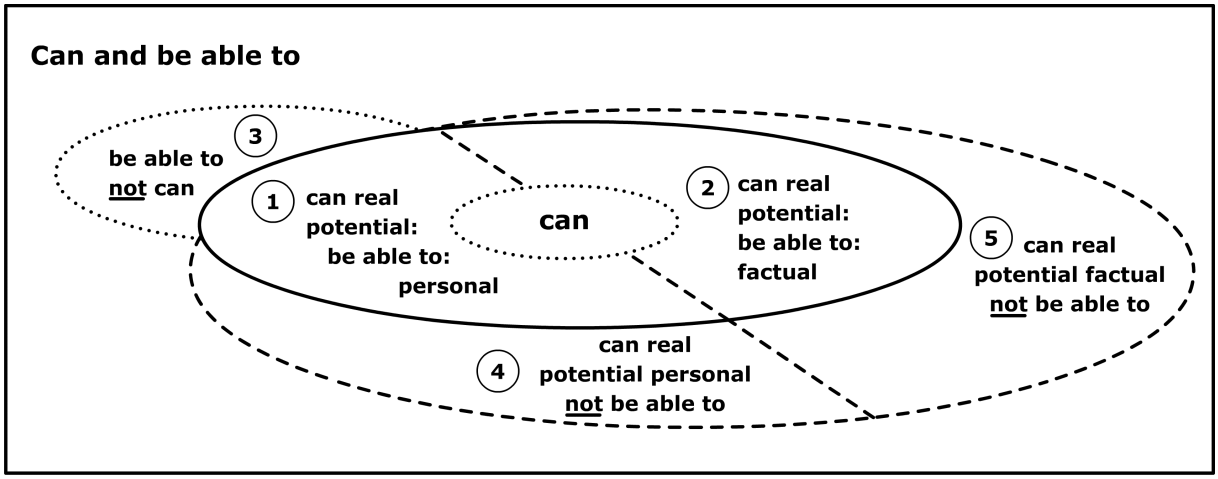


Figure 7.7: Can and be able to

1 Can and Be Able to: Personal

In the following examples the *can* or *can't* formulation is followed by a *be able to* version.

(7.5.1) I can speak French.

This is about ability: I claim to have the potential to do this. Compare with:

(7.5.2) I am able to speak French.

I state my ability as fact.

(7.5.3) Can you help me please?

(7.5.4) Are you able to help me?

Function = *request*. Both these are about whether you have the potential to help me or not. '*Are you able*' sounds more formal.

(7.5.5) Can't you help me?

(7.5.6) Aren't you able to help me?

Function = *request*. Don't you have the potential to help me? These might be said after an initial refusal or show of reluctance. The '*Aren't you able*' formulation sounds more formal.

(7.5.7) I can't fly a plane.

(7.5.8) I am not able to fly a plane.

These are both about *inability*: *I do not have the potential to do this*. Again, the '*Are you able to*' formulation sounds more formal. In all these examples *can* is the simpler form and the more common.

2 Can and Be Able to: Factual

(7.5.9) Cheetahs can run very fast.

(7.5.10) Cheetahs are able to run very fast.

(7.5.11) Pigs can't fly.

(7.5.12) Pigs are not able to fly.

In these examples we are talking about *objective potential* [cheetahs] and *objective no potential* [pigs]. The second is a functional impossibility: pigs do not have wings or easy access to pixie dust. These are not personal meanings uses of the *can* filter [unlike *I can do it*] as we presumably have evidence for the assertion. There seems to be a *personal* use of the *can potential filter* [Section 1. above] and a more *factual* one [seen here]. Both, though, are about *real potential* and you should carefully consider whether making a distinction in the minds of your learners is necessary.

In all the examples above the *can* formulation is the preferred conventional formulation. It seems that when we have a choice between *can* and *be able to* we tend to choose *can*.

3 Be Able to, not Can

There are times where *be able to* has to be used.

(7.5.13) *I will can do it.

(7.5.14) I will be able to do it.

Here the *be able to* sequence seems to be being used like the 'infinitive' of *can*, if you are comfortable with such metalanguage and concepts.[1]

4 Can, Personal, not Be Able to

There are some cases where *be able to* cannot be used, or is extremely unlikely, or is significantly different, and we need to use *can* but still with the idea of real potential.

(7.5.15) I'm sure this problem can be solved.

I think the real potential of a solution to the problem exists: it is a functional possibility. This could be paraphrased with *be able to* in various formulations but the paraphrases are significantly different e.g. *'I'm sure we will be able to solve this problem.'*

(7.5.16) It can't be done.

In this example I think that it's just impossible. I think no potential exists: it is a functional impossibility. Again, a *be able to* version is very different and indeed is impossible if we take '*it*' as a starting point.

5 Can, Factual, not Be Able to

(7.5.17) It can rain a lot here in May.

In this example because of the potential of this happening, raining a lot is construed as a possibility i.e. not impossible. No *be able to* version of this is possible. This kind of claim would be made with objective evidence and the topic is marked by an objectifying '*it*'.

Again we have a similar mixture of personal [4] and factual [5] *can real potential* uses when *be able to* cannot be used.

[1] Thanks to Melissa Humphrys for suggesting this 'infinitive' of can idea.

Can and Can't

The key idea of *real potential* gives us a reference for all the uses of *can* and *can't*. Potential is, of course, a difficult idea to get across entirely in English – thus the need for a brief discussion in L1 of the idea of potential, if practical.

Changing Conventions: Can and May

The *May I*? permission convention is being replaced by a *Can I*? permission convention. *Can* is becoming more common in this function; *may* is becoming less common. *Can* is extending its range and it is now conventional to express a number of functions using *can* which were formerly expressed using *may*.

Function: offer

(7.5.18) May I help you?

(7.5.19) Can I help you?

Function: seeking permission

(7.5.20) May I go now?

(7.5.21) Can I go now?

Function: seeking permission

What your learners need to know

- We can talk about subjective-personal and objective-factual close real potential by using the modal/modifying verb *can*.

This verb can be used for:

Personal potential

(7.5.22) You can speak English beautifully.

Factual potential

(7.5.23) It can get very hot here in summertime.

Prospective personal potential

(7.5.24) You can expect to be promoted soon.

Future personal potential seen from now + co-text

(7.5.25) I can help you tomorrow.

Functions

You can use *can* to make requests, offers, and ask permission.

(7.5.26) Can you help me please?

(7.5.27) Can I help you?

(7.5.28) Can I go now?

The negative form is *can't* and it means that there is *no potential* for this happening. *Can't* can be used for all cardinal perspectives.

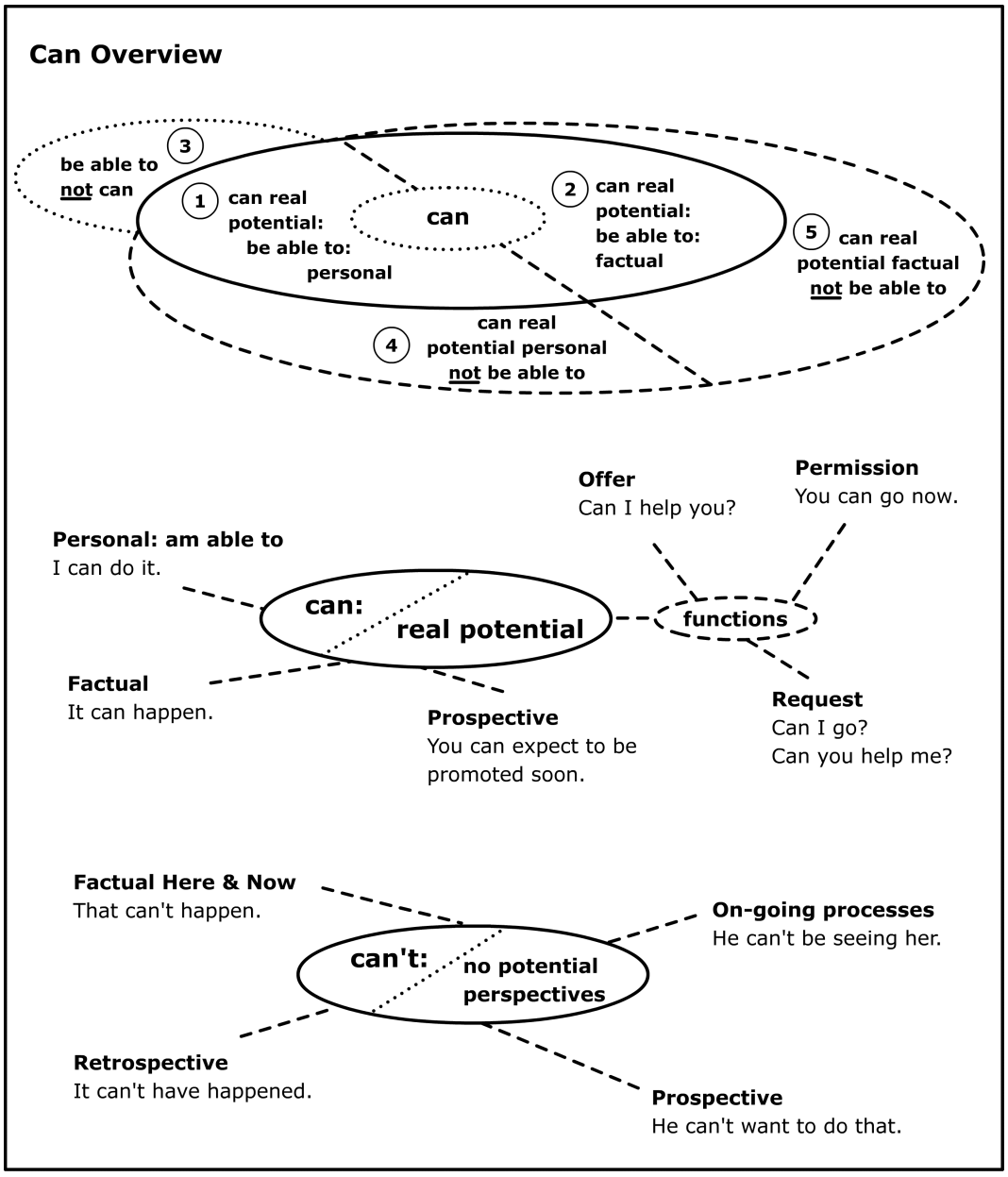


Figure 7.8: Can Overview

No potential +

Factual

(7.5.29) That can't be true.

Prospective

(7.5.30) He can't want to do that.

On-going process

(7.5.31) He can't be seeing her.

Retrospective

(7.5.32) That can't have happened.

Note: *potential*: a term taken from Yule (2003) *Explaining English Grammar* but with the addition of the term *real*.

7.6 Idea 20: Distant Potential: Could and Couldn't

Like the pairings of *may and might*, and *will and would*, the close real potential expressed by *can* has a distant counterpart idea: we can express distant ideas of potential by using *could* and *couldn't*. *Could* works in the Time, Reality and Formality distance fields.

Realisation and Discussion

Personal Potential in the Past

Compare:

(7.6.1) I could swim when I was six.

(7.6.2) I was able to swim when I was six.

(7.6.3) I could swim across the lake.

(7.6.4) I was able to swim across the lake.

There seems to be a slight difference between the idea of *could distant potential* and realised or demonstrated *was able to* potential in the past [*potential* vs *factual declaration of ability*] but they are practically synonymous, in these cases. As this use of *could* is set in the past it is objectified, just like the use of *would* in the past. *Could*, placed in the past, describes objective potential, which is why there is little difference between the examples above. Let us consider another example:

(7.6.5) There was a beautiful park where I could go for long walks.

Could describes distant potential. While this does not tell you that I *did* go for long walks it is implied. Compare this example with the two below.

(7.6.6) There was a beautiful park where I was able to go for long walks.

(7.6.7) There was a beautiful park where I went for long walks.

Was able to expresses the *ability condition* of the subject of the sentence. The distant *went* describes factually demonstrated walks.

These are fine distinctions between distant potential in the past, the past ability condition and factually demonstrated ability.

Couldn't

(7.6.8) I couldn't stop him.

This expresses inability, distant in time: I didn't have the potential to do this. It is similar to:

(7.6.9) I wasn't able to stop him.

Factual Potential in the Past

(7.6.10) After the law was passed, women could vote.

(7.6.11) After the law was passed, women were able to vote.

Women had the potential to vote: they *could* vote. This use has the same potential idea as the examples above - women did not *have* to vote - they had the opportunity: the *potential* to do so. '*I could do something in the past.*' is a personal assertion of potential but accepted as objective unless there are facts to the contrary. '*Women could vote*' is a factual distant in time potential use of *could* based on evidence. This parallels the factual use of *can* and *can't* based on evidence as we saw earlier. Here, the evidence is the historical record.

Could, not Was Able to

The uses of *could* above are practically synonymous with *was/were able to*. As with all synonyms though there are times when they are not synonymous.

(7.6.12) Nothing could be done to help him.

This example has the [negative: *nothing*] distant potential idea of *could* but cannot be paraphrased with *was able to* except as something like '*We were not able to do anything for him.*' which is not quite the same.

Formal Distance

(7.6.13) Could you help me please?

This is formal distance, asking *Do you have the potential to do this?*

Function = *polite request*.

There are at least four kinds of responses in answer to this question.

(7.6.14) Yes, of course [I can].

The spoken [or unspoken] *can* brings the potential idea into the close here and now: I do have the potential to do this for you. This has the function of agreeing to help, especially in combination with the '*yes of course*'.

(7.6.15) I'm afraid I can't.

The use of *can't* tells the listener that the real potential is not there: *I am not able to help you*.

(7.6.16) I would like to....[but I can't]

The *would* maintains distance to suggest that it is not possible but would be under different conditions.

(7.6.17) Of course I will.

The use of *will* in the response switches the idea from one of potential to one of certainty: *you can be certain of my help*.

Reality Distance

(7.6.18) I could do it myself if I had the time.

Distant in reality: the potential would exist but I don't have the time to make it exist.

(7.6.19) If I could speak Spanish, I would move to Chile.

This is distant in reality: If the potential existed...

Because of this distant potential idea *could* can be used to express distanced possibility.

(7.6.20) You could be right.

This is distant potential: the potential exists for you to be right. Compare with: *You may/might be right*. Both are about possibility but rooted in different ideas.

(7.6.21) You could apologize.

This is distant expectation: the potential exists for you to do this if you chose to apologise.

(7.6.22) Couldn't you apologize?

This is distant expectation: do you want to use the potential you have to do this?

(7.6.23) That couldn't be right, could it?

This is more distant [possible] potential. This is different from *That can't be right* [we are sure there is no potential]. *Couldn't be right* is distanced potential, not excluded/no potential.

Can and Could

It is important to contrast real potential [*can*] with distant potential [*could*]. For example:

(7.6.24) He could be the murderer.

(7.6.25) *He can be the murderer.

(7.6.26) *He is able to be the murderer.

(7.6.27) He is the murderer.

We do not conventionally talk about a particular person's real [*can*] potential in this way, though we can talk about people in general in this way: *Everyone can kill*. When we are not sure about his potential to be the murderer we have to use *could*. *Can* and *can't* exclude possibility; *could* allows for possibility of potential because of the distance.

What your learners need to know

- We can talk about subjective distant potential using the modal/modifying verb *could*.
- The negative form is couldn't.

This verb can be used for:

Potential in Time Distance

(7.6.28) I could swim when I was five.

(7.6.29) Nothing could be done to help him.

Potential in Formal Situations

(7.6.30) Could you help me please?

Potential in Reality Distance

(7.6.31) If I could drive I wouldn't have to use the train every day.

Distant Potential as Possibility

(7.6.32) I could go I suppose.

In this last example, I am signalling my reluctance by distancing the idea. I am admitting reluctantly that I have the potential to do this. This is a variant on reality distance as I am admitting the reality of the situation.

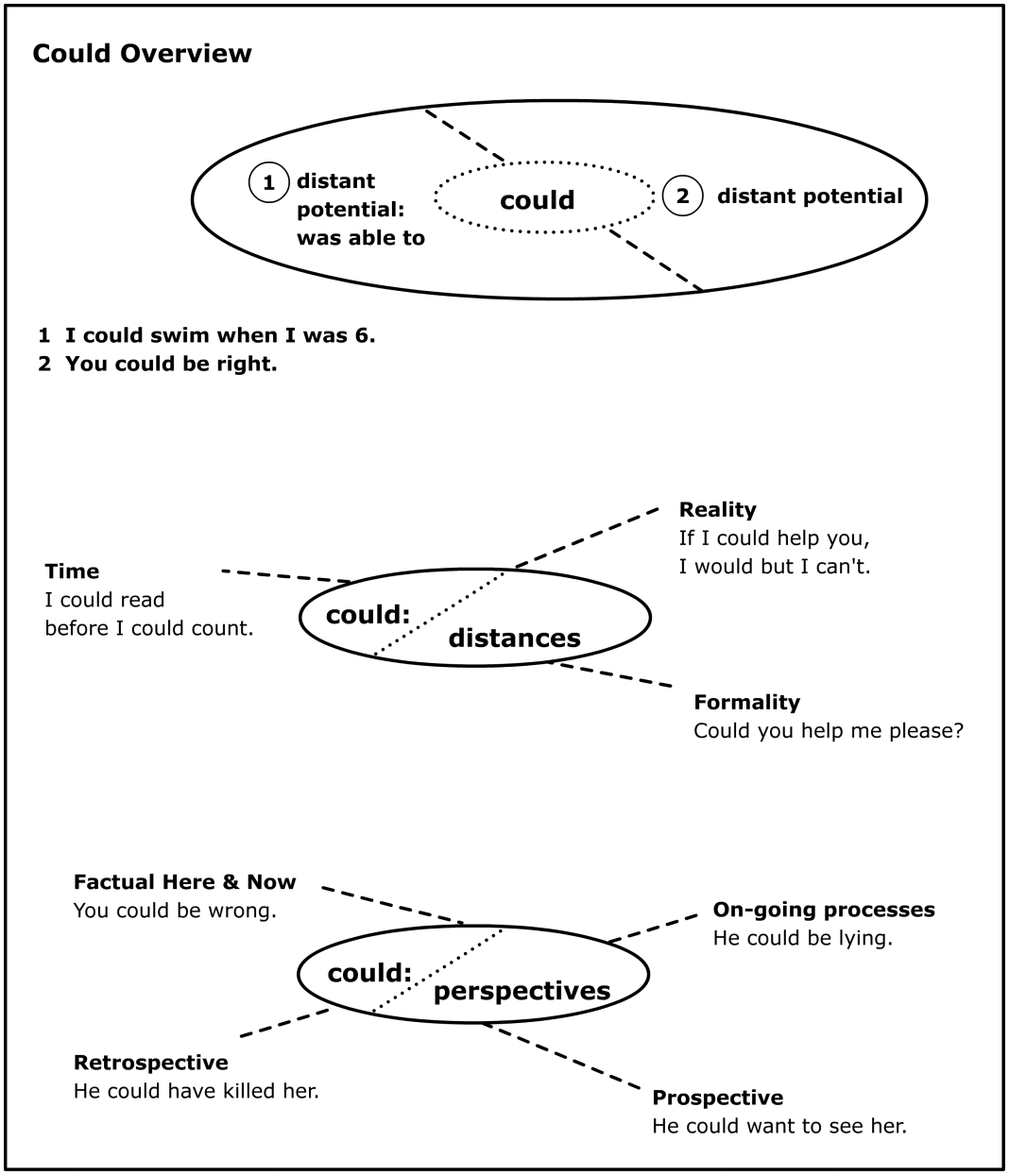


Figure 7.9: Idea 20 Could

Could can be used with all four perspectives.

Factual

(7.6.33) You could be right.

Retrospective

(7.6.34) He could have killed her.

On-going process

(7.6.35) He could be lying.

Prospective

(7.6.36) He could want to see her.

7.7 Idea 21: Strong Requirement/Commitment: Shall

We can express the idea that in our opinion something is strongly *required* by the situation or a *commitment* needs to be made; two sides of the same coin. To do this we use *shall*.

Realisation and Discussion

(7.7.1) This contract shall be valid for two years only.

This expresses strong requirement in legal English where there is a shared agreement: we agree that this is required: we make a commitment.

(7.7.2) It shall be done.

I require this to be done. I commit myself to doing it or making it happen.

(7.7.3) Shall I help you?

Your requirement: What do you require of me? Shall I make a commitment to meet your requirements?

(7.7.4) Shall we....?

Shared requirement/commitment: I suggest this but does it fit in with your idea of the requirements of the situation?

Shall and *shan't* are becoming less common in the language, often being replaced by *will* and *won't* because of changes in the conventions, being driven by complex changes in society. Eventually *shall* may be restricted to legal English and '*Shall we...?*'.

What your learners need to know

- We express the idea that, in our opinion, something is required or a commitment needs to be made by using the modal/modifying verb *shall*.
- For example I require something of you [*You shall do it.*], I make the necessary commitment [*I shall...*], I want to know what you require [*Shall I go then?*] or we make a joint decision [and commitment] about a shared requirement [*Shall we?*].

This verb can be used to talk about:

Here and now ideas

(7.7.5) I shall do it.

Retrospective ideas

(7.7.6) Don't worry I shall have finished by the deadline.

Prospective ideas

(7.7.7) I shall have to go to the party.

On-going process

(7.7.8) I shall be going to the party.

(7.7.9) I shall be seeing her later.

Note: Yule (2003) applies requirement to *should* while I choose to distinguish between *shall requirement/commitment* and *desirable should* [Idea 22].

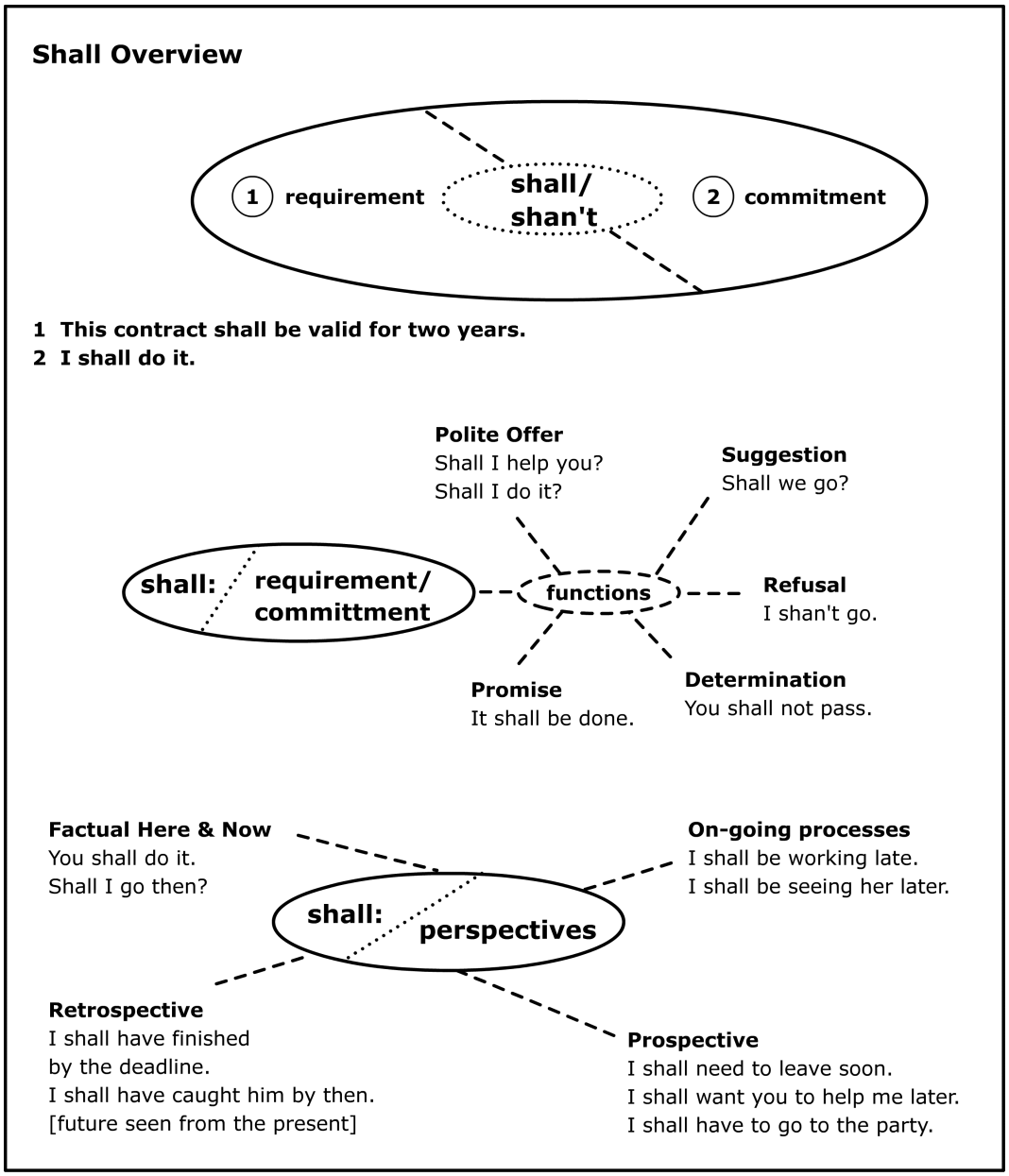


Figure 7.10: Idea 21 Shall

7.8 Idea 22: Desirability: Should and Shouldn't

A weaker idea [more distant] than *shall requirement/commitment* is the idea of something being [in our opinion] *desirable* or *undesirable*. We use *should* and *shouldn't* to express these ideas.

Realisation and Discussion

(7.8.1) You should clean your shoes every day.

In my opinion this is best if you want to take care of your shoes. Function: *advice*.

(7.8.2) I think you should have a day off.

I think this is desirable for your own good. Function: *advice*.

(7.8.3) What should I do?

What do you think is desired of me in this situation? Function: *request for advice*.

(7.8.4) I should go now. I don't want to be late.

This is a desirable course of action for me.

(7.8.5) You shouldn't smoke.

It's bad for you. In my opinion this is what is best for you. Function: *advice*.

(7.8.6) I think you shouldn't do that.

I think this is desirable for your own good. Function: *advice*.

(7.8.7) Why shouldn't I do it?

Isn't this what is desirable in this situation? Function: *request for advice*. Or if said in strong tone, indignation.

(7.8.8) You shouldn't make fun of him.

I think this is a desirable course of action for you. Function: *advice*.

The idea of *desirability* is weaker than the ideas of requirement/commitment [modal/modifying verb *shall*] or obligation [modal/modifying verb *must*, as we shall see later]. Desirability is about things which it would be better to do.

Contrast: Shall vs Should

Subjective Requirement [Strong]

(7.8.9) You shall do it.

I say that this is required of you. I am not giving you an alternative.

Desirability [Weak]

(7.8.10) You should do it.

In this example I think this is desirable for you to do. You have a choice but in my opinion this would be best. *Should* has the idea of my opinion on your action [*You should...*] or a less than sure [*What should we do?*] appeal for a joint decision based on our shared understanding of the situation.

What your learners need to know

- We can express our opinion of the *desirability* and *undesirability* of a course of action using *should* and *shouldn't*.

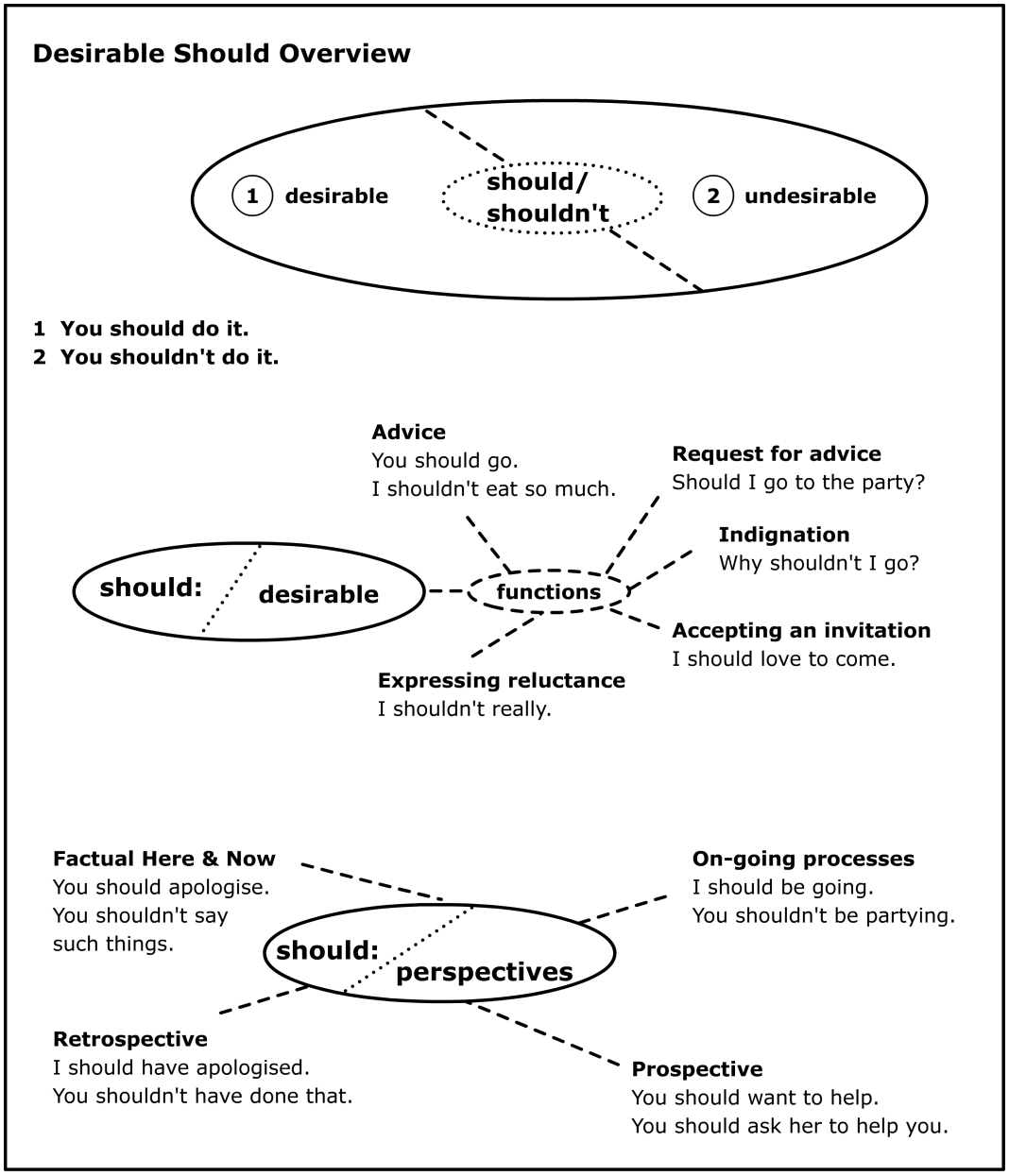


Figure 7.11: Idea 22 Desirable Should

We can use this verb to talk about all four Cardinal Perspectives:

Factual here and now

(7.8.11) You should apologise.

(7.8.12) You shouldn't do that.

Prospective

(7.8.13) You should go to see a doctor.

(7.8.14) You shouldn't need to take any medicine.

Retrospective

(7.8.15) You should have apologised to her.
(7.8.16) You shouldn't have said that.

On-going processes

(7.8.17) You should be studying not partying.
(7.8.18) You shouldn't be partying every night.

7.9 Idea 23: Probability: Should and Shouldn't

Should is not limited to expressing the idea of *desirability*. We can express the idea that we think something is *more probable than not* by using *should* and *shouldn't*. This use of *should* and *shouldn't*, as distinct from *desirable should* and *undesirable shouldn't*, will be clear from the co-text and context.

Realisation and Discussion

We can discuss probability directly by specifying the chances of something happening.
(7.9.1) There's a 65% chance of it working.
Here we make a factual statement of our considered or calculated probability. Generally though, we do not need to be so precise and so we express the idea of the general probability of something working or being sufficient etc. This reflects our rough idea or judgement that something is more likely than not.
Note that in the paraphrases of *should* below we have to express the idea in stronger terms of certainty [will] or factuality [Do Form] modified by the lexical idea of *probably*.
The probability ideas expressed by *should* are positive ideas but less than certain.
(7.9.2) That should work.
In my judgement it will probably work.
(7.9.3) That should be enough.
In my judgement that is probably enough.
(7.9.4) That should do.
In my judgement that is probably good enough.
(7.9.5) He should be OK now.
In my judgement he will probably get better.
(7.9.6) Really? That shouldn't happen.
In my judgement that is/was not probable, though it seems to have happened in this case.
This probability idea can also be used to talk about contingency situations as in the paired examples below.
(7.9.7) Should that be the case then we will have to act.
(7.9.8) If this is the case then we will have to act.
(7.9.9) Should you need any help please do not hesitate to contact me.
(7.9.10) If you need any help in the future please do not hesitate to contact me.
The idea of probability ties in with the idea of *if*. *Should*, in these cases has the idea of: '*if this probability happens*'. This seems more distanced, less likely, than the plain *if* formulation.
The use of *should* in the example below has an idea of distancing formality and/or an idea of the need for help being less likely than the *if* + *need* example because of the added idea of probability.
(7.9.11) If you need any help, please let me know.
(7.9.12) If you should need any help, please let me know.

What your learners need to know

- We can express a subjective judgement of positive probability using *should*.
- This expresses the simple idea that something, in my opinion, is *more probable than not*.
- We can express the negative idea using *shouldn't*.
- This probability idea can also be used to express a hypothetical idea of '*if this probability happens*'.

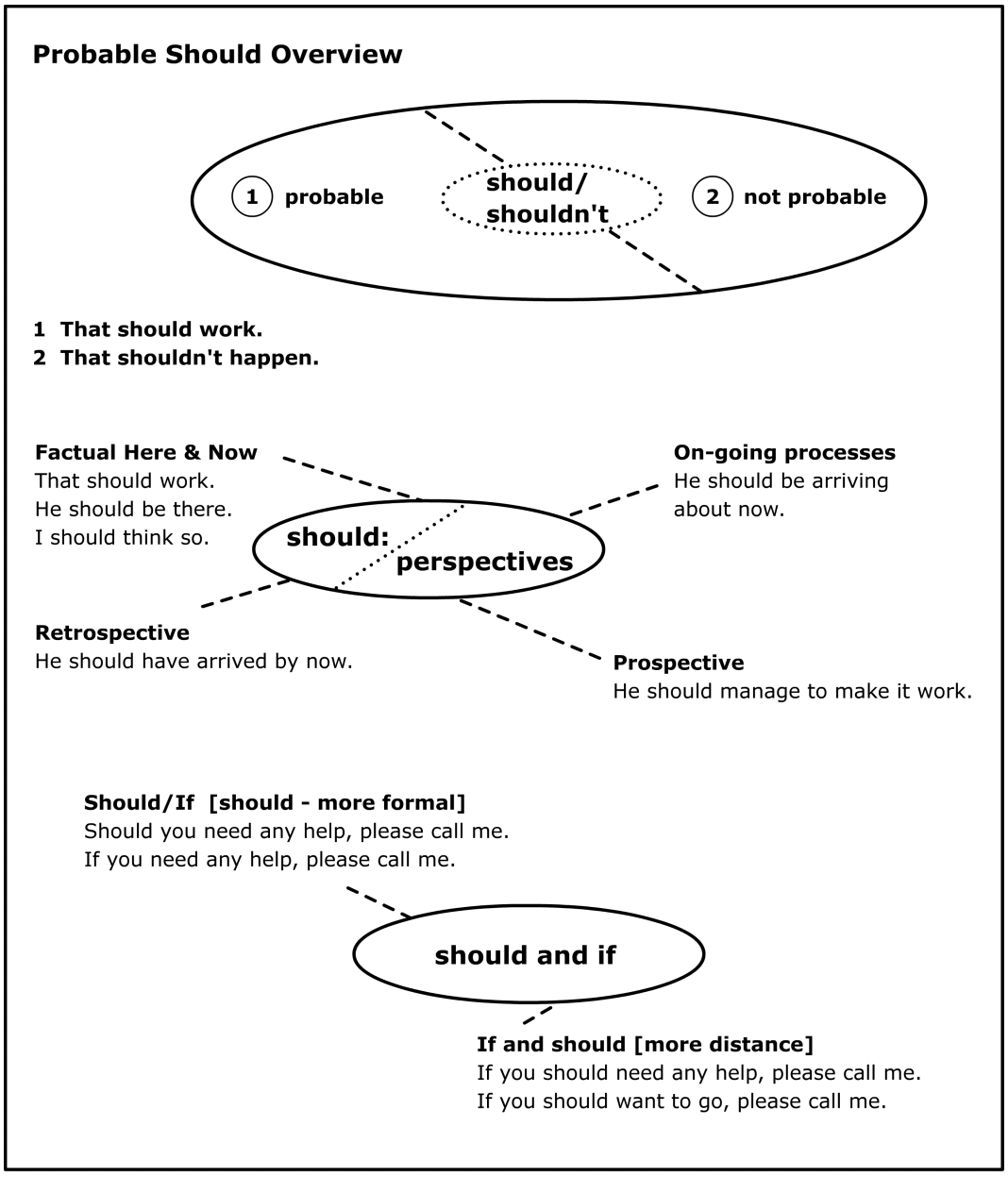


Figure 7.12: Idea 23 Probable Should

We can use *probable should* to talk about:

Factual here and now ideas

(7.9.13) That should do.

Prospective ideas

(7.9.14) He should manage to fix it.

Retrospective ideas

(7.9.15) He should have arrived there by now.

On-going processes

(7.9.16) He should be arriving about now.

Conditional probabilities

(7.9.17) If you should require assistance, please do not hesitate to ask.

7.10 Possibility

Some writers claim that all modal/modifying verbs can be used to talk about possibilities. This ignores the fact that these '*possibilities*' are based on different core ideas. If it were true that '*all modal verbs can be used to talk about possibilities*' then it wouldn't matter which were used. Obviously it does matter, so the argument sometimes moves on to specifying percentage degrees of possibility. However, who decides on what percentage? Is it just case of one possibility being more or less than another one [50% vs 60%] or is it more precise than that?

A better way to think about this area is shown in Figure 7.13 below. You do not express percentage degrees of possibility, you express the idea of *certainty*, of *probability*, of *possibility* and of *potential* using these modal/modifying verbs. The contrasts are between the ideas e.g. between *certainty* and *possibility* - not degrees of possibility. The learner needs the anchor of the meaning idea of the word to express the meaning - not the nebulous concept of wanting to express a nebulous degree of possibility.

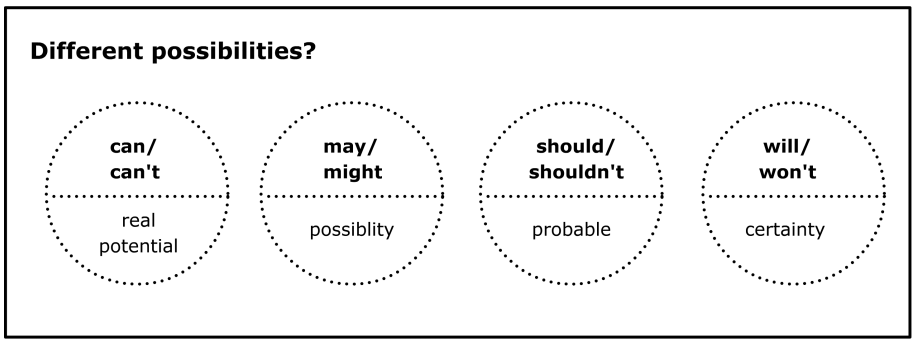


Figure 7.13: Different Possibilities

7.11 Idea 24: Necessity: Obligation: Must and Mustn't

The idea of *necessity* is about there being no alternative. The first '*necessary*' idea we will discuss is obligation. We can express our feeling of subjective necessary obligation [*in my opinion you have no alternative course of action in this situation*] by using *must*.

Realisation and Discussion

(7.11.1) You really must apologise.

In my opinion you have no alternative except to apologise.

(7.11.2) You mustn't be rude.

In my opinion you have no alternative except to be polite.

(7.11.3) I must write him a letter.

In my opinion I have no alternative except to write him a letter. The alternative, breaking off correspondence, is not acceptable.

In contrast to this idea of subjective obligation, the sequence of *have + to + Do Form* is used to express objective obligation where something external to the speaker compels the prospective responsibility to act. The factual Do Form [*have*] leaves no room for a subjective interpretation.

(7.11.4) You have to be polite.

In general, according to the norms of society and good behaviour, you have no alternative except be polite.

(7.11.5) You have to drive on the left in Britain.

This is the law.

However, some of the general idea of this last example can also be expressed using *must*.

(7.11.6) You must drive on the left in Britain.

In this case it is unclear whether the speaker is invoking their personal authority [e.g. speaking as a police officer/dominant male/female, and making a subjective observation on the necessity of doing something] or just using the force of part of the *must* idea that you have no choice. Some people think, or feel, that *must* is stronger than *have + to + do* and this is because *must* is personal – not objective – and so it *feels* stronger, though there is no quantifiable difference in strength. If someone thinks there is a difference ask them what it is: 5%, 10%?

In the following example the speaker is using their authority to make the case of an obligation existing. There is no external law to appeal to.

(7.11.7) Parent to child: You must finish your homework.

The parent is saying that this is necessary.

The Lack of Obligation

Both *must* and *mustn't* denote subjective obligations. To talk about the lack of such obligation we used *needn't*. The *need + to + Do Form* sequence itself expresses an objective idea of prospective obligation [like *have + to + do*]. When we use *needn't* we do not use *need + not + to + Do Form* but just *need + not + Do Form*.

(7.11.8) You need to wait.

Need + prospective to. The course of action is made clear by the prospective *to*.

(7.11.9) You do not need to wait.

The *do not* applies to all that follows: *do + not* [*need* + prospective *to + Do Form*]

(7.11.10) You needn't wait.

In this example the waiting is not necessary. The *not* applies to the *wait*. The lack of the *prospective to* in 7.11.10 is because of the lack of the prospective idea. There is a lack of obligation and therefore no need to do something in the future.

Comparisons

Compare these examples.

(7.11.11) You must get your hair cut.

I insist this is necessary. Subjective.

(7.11.12) You mustn't get your hair cut.

I insist this is not necessary. Subjective.

(7.11.13) You have to get your hair cut.

This is a necessary course of action. Objective *have + prospective to*.

(7.11.14) You need to get your hair cut.

This is a necessary course of action. Objective *need + prospective to*.

(7.11.15) You don't have to get your hair cut.

This is an unnecessary/optional course of action. Objective.

(7.11.16) You don't need to get your hair cut.

This is unnecessary/optional. Objective.

(7.11.17) You needn't get your hair cut.

This is an unnecessary/optional course of action. Objective.

Verbs like *need + to* are often called semi-modal verbs because there seems to be an element of personal opinion in the idea of the verb though there may be other reasons for using *need*: *You need* [I think or the rules require you] *to get your hair cut*. Here we make a strict distinction between modal/modifying verbs like *must* and verbs like *need* and *ought* which have different following grammar. The idea of *subjective necessary obligation* in the areas of personal authority, social and moral responsibility and forceful advice [to others and yourself] is expressed by *must*.

Contrasts: must, have to, ought to and should

Must and *should* are personal ideas: they are modal/modifying verbs. *Have* [+ *to*] and *ought* [+ *to*] are objective ideas.

(7.11.18) You must do it.

In my opinion, the situation demands this of you. I think this is necessary for you to do and I think you have no choice. This is subjective [strong].

(7.11.19) You have to do it.

You have no choice. The situation demands this of you. You have no choice in this given situation. This is objective [strong].

(7.11.20) You should do it.

In my opinion it would be best if you did this. I think this is desirable in this situation. This is subjective [weak].

(7.11.21) You ought to do it.

It would be best if you did this because the situation requires it of you. This is desirable in this situation. This is subjective [weak].

The subjective ideas expressed by *must* and *should* are opinions of the moment and comment on the here and now situation like all modal/modifying verbs and as such are followed by a Do Form: **must to do*. There is no explicit idea of futurity *in the verb itself*, though there may be an implicit looking forward to a course of action necessarily in the future in the utterance as a whole depending on the following verb[s], as the focus is on our viewpoint now. Modal/modifying verbs are about our opinion/perspective now on the past, present or future, except for some of the uses of *would* and *could*.

In contrast to the subjective ideas of *must* and *should*, the objective ideas expressed with *have/need + to + do* and *ought + to + do* look forward from the present situation to a future action using the *prospective to*. The current situation demands that you do something.

An obligation is when you [objectively or subjectively] have no real choice in the matter: the situation demands of you a certain response.

Ought + to + do is used when you do have some choice in the matter and so is weaker than an obligation: in this situation it is objectively desirable, though not compulsory, for you to do something.

What your learners need to know

- We can express the necessity of doing something or not doing something by using *must* and *mustn't*, because the situation [and the people in it] creates an obligation for us to act in a particular way.
- This contrasts with the idea of what is desirable [expressed using *should*] and objective prospective obligations [expressed using *have + to + do*].

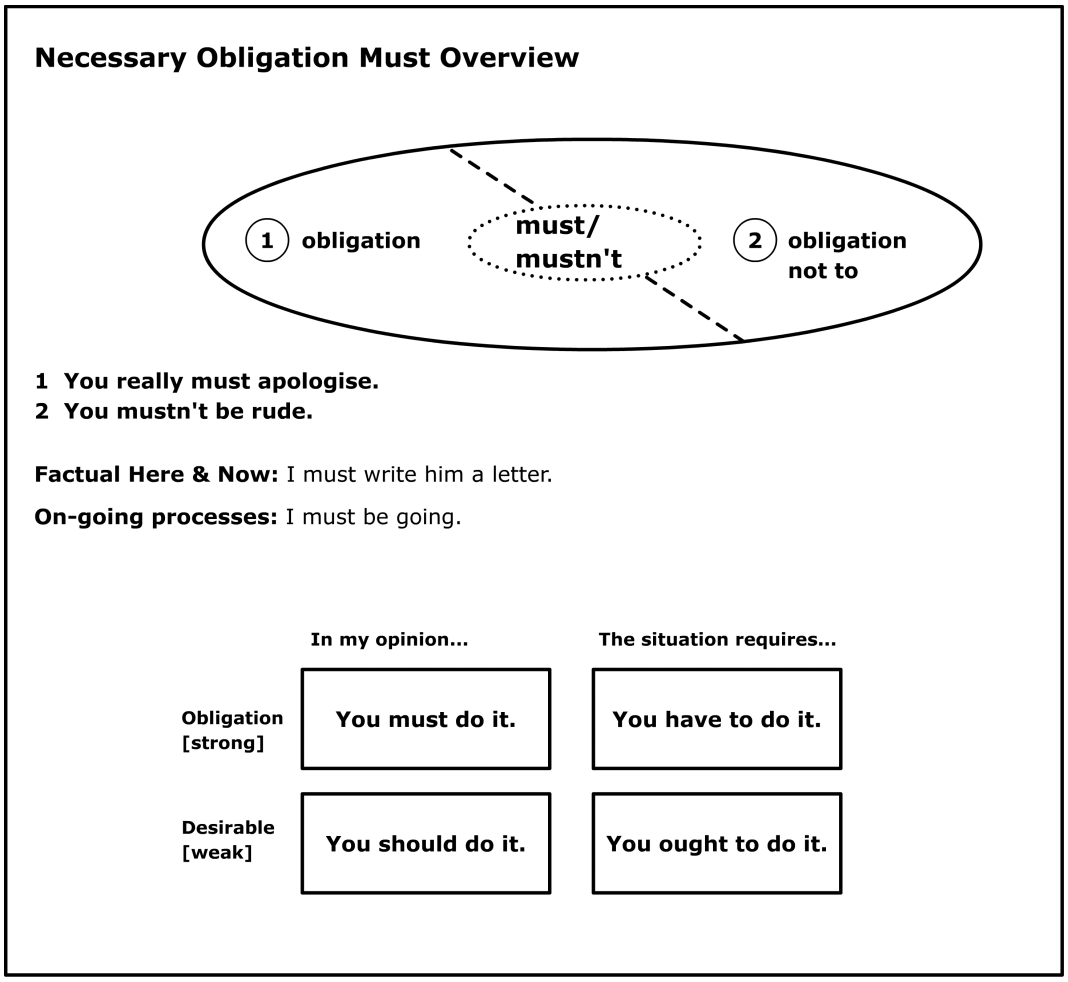


Figure 7.14: Idea 24 Must Obligation

We can use necessary obligation *must* to talk about:

Factual here and now ideas

(7.11.22) You must do it.

On-going processes

(7.11.23) I must be going.

Distant Obligation

If we want to talk about distant factual ideas of obligation we use *had to*.

(7.11.24) He had to do it.

7.12 Idea 25: Necessity: Logical Conclusion: Must and Can't

In any given situation we might want to express a *strong logical conclusion*. We feel something is *necessarily true* given the facts we have at the moment of speaking. This is still a subjective idea – not one of objective fact – because our conclusion might change given new facts – it is only necessarily true given our current knowledge. We can express this idea using *must*. The co-text and context will tell us whether this logical conclusion idea or the subjective *necessary obligation must* of Idea 24 is being expressed.

Realisation and Discussion

(7.12.1) That must be right. I've checked my calculations twice.

According to the information I have and the calculations I have done I am sure that this is right but I am not stating it as a fact [i.e. '*That is right*'].

(7.12.2) Something must be wrong. Tom's never this late.

I am sure there is a problem based on my knowledge of the situation and of Tom's previous behaviour – therefore I draw the logical conclusion. I don't *know* there is something wrong – I infer it and express it as a necessary logical conclusion given the current state of my knowledge.

We use *must* to express our necessary deductions from the information we have. It is a subjective statement of our understanding of the situation given the information we have. If the information changes we might change our opinion of the situation – therefore it is a subjective opinion not a factual statement.

Necessarily Not True

To express the negative idea – of something, in our opinion, necessarily being *not* true – we use the idea of there being no potential for it to be true and use *can't* to express the idea.

(7.12.3) That can't be right.

In my opinion the potential does not exist for it to be right. Compare with:

(7.12.4) That isn't right.

This is a factual declaration of knowledge.

What your learners need to know

- In any situation we can draw a *logical conclusion* based on what we know or believe and say that this is necessarily the case.
- We use *must* to do this.
- To express the opposite idea we use *can't* [in my opinion there is no potential for this to be true].

We can use *must* and *can't* to talk about:

Factual here and now ideas

(7.12.5) He must be guilty.
(7.12.6) He can't be guilty.

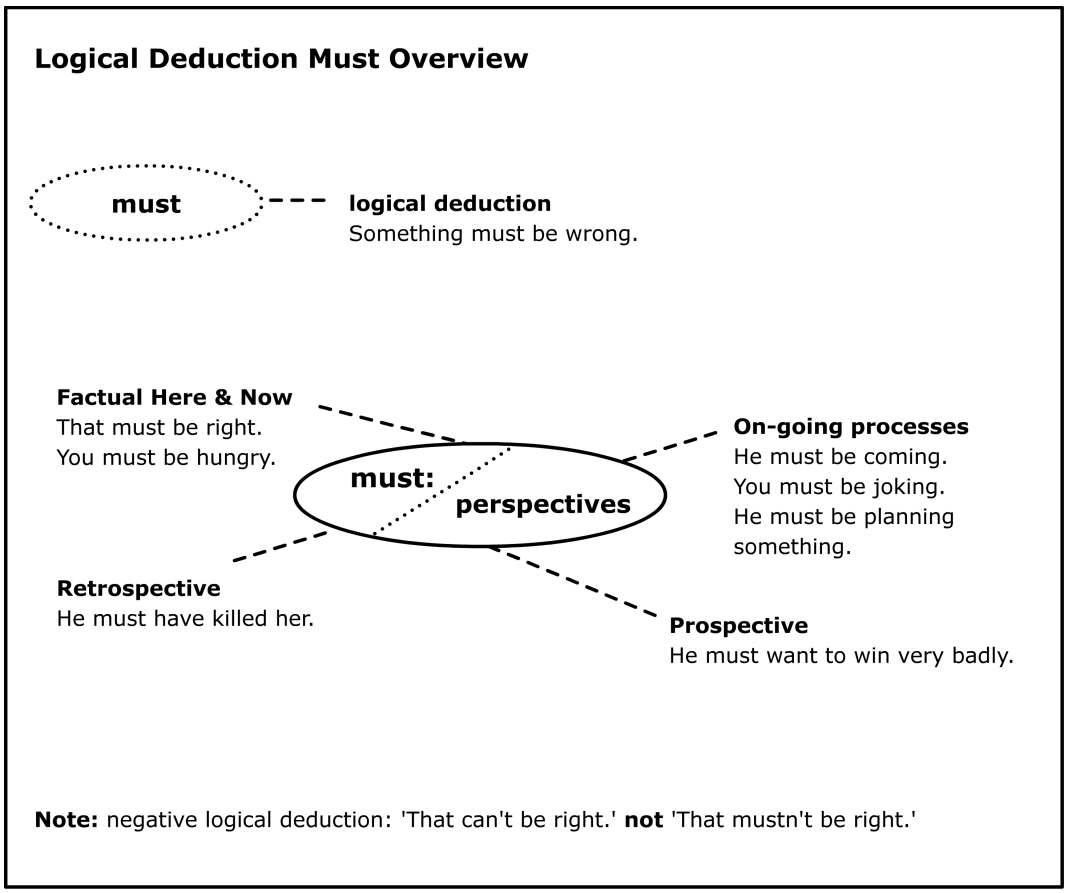


Figure 7.15: Idea 25 Logical Deduction Must

Retrospective ideas

(7.12.7) He must have killed her.
(7.12.8) He can't have killed her.

On-going processes

(7.12.9) He must be walking about in the snow.
(7.12.10) He can't be walking about in the snow.
(7.12.11) He must be joking.
(7.12.12) He can't be joking.

Prospective ideas

(7.12.13) He must want to kill her.
(7.12.14) He can't want to kill her.

8 Power Conventions

We have looked at the five Distance Orientation Ideas and the twenty Form Meaning Ideas of English grammar. We have seen how the form meanings of some verbs orientate text to the deep structure of distance and add information to the lexical idea of the verb. We have also seen how some of these verbs can be combined using the conventions of the sequence, for example, the condition marker *Be* can be combined with Do-ing and Done Forms. We have also considered the key distance idea that words which mean together belong together - the closer words are in a sequence the stronger their meaning relationship is.

In this part of the grammar we look at some of the key conventions of the language which govern how the key ideas are used and at how the ideas are combined into more complex propositions.

Let us first rehearse the arguments that underpin this grammar.

1. Language is made up of collocations of sounds into words.
2. All words have meaning and grammar. Information about this is stored in the lexicon as w+.
3. We construct and understand text one word at a time, though some words may trigger other words to make e.g. a conventional phrase or idiom [then understood as one unit], using our active prospective grammar.
4. We are primed to expect and produce [through our active prospective grammar] conventional language.
5. The deep structure of English is Distance.
6. Form meanings of verbs orientate what we say and write to distance.
7. The conventions of the sequence govern how words are put together. This establishes the meaning-connectedness between words. Words are placed according to the Placement Principle to establish their associations.

8.1 Conventional Language

Conventions are important because we are primed to expect and produce conventional language. When we do not produce conventional language it can be seen as language innovation [e.g. James Joyce], a mistake e.g. [non-native language speakers; some native speakers e.g. George W. Bush (*the decider*; though this should rightly be allowed as a coinage); Barack Obama (*corpseman*; *Austrian language*; just wrong, no allowances)], or a slip [e.g. educated native speakers].

Language can be conventional in some situations, e.g. down the pub, but unacceptable in others, e.g. at a job interview, and an accomplished person will be able to operate in a number of different conventional registers - not just one. Some people's conventional language is considered non-standard [e.g. the underclass: *I don't know nothin*]. Unconventional language can produce a range of reactions - from a raised eyebrow to an actual comment, a rejected job application, or a letter to a newspaper, abusive blog entry or comment from an enraged correspondent.

(8.1.1) Football Commentator 1: It (*the ball*) went wide and high.

Football Commentator 2: Did you say wide and high?

Football Commentator 1: It went high and wide.

BBC World Service Sports World 17th March 2012

Wigan vs West Bromich Albion. Final score 1:1.

[Wigan remained bottom of the Premier League.]

Conventions matter, even in little things like the binomials example above, and the most important conventions are, as above, the conventions of the sequence: word order.

So far we have mainly looked at individual word meanings – their ideas – now it is time to look in more detail at how they are used together. From Priming Theory we know words have collocates and colligations etc. and the intermeshing of these produce text. It is clear that we cannot teach all the possible combinations of words. There would not be much point in telling learners that a word is statistically more likely to appear near the beginning of a sentence or at the end of a paragraph etc. A learner will have to come to understand this implicitly through noticing where and how words in spoken and written texts are used - not through teaching. Teaching can help prime some parts of the language - learners will have to self-prime most of it. Learners have to notice [and learn] most collocations and other features of text through exposure to text.

8.2 Combining the Ideas of English

The ideas of English can be combined in different ways, but these ways are governed by conventions – mainly by *conventions of the sequence* [word order]; by the idea that the distance between words shows their relative connectedness - the strength of their association; by the *given/new*, *known/unknown*, *theme/rheme ideas*, and when these are flouted for effect; and the ideas of how Foci and Information are organised; and of discourse requirements. Learners have to learn which ideas can be combined, how they can be combined and what the effect of their combination is on the meaning they can express in English.

Let us look at a sentence from a US intelligence report about water security analysed with elements of the Associative Model [see Figure 8.1]. The sentence is:

(8.2.1) Limited experiments are being conducted to develop food plants which can tolerate salt or waste water.

Some things to note from Figure 8.1 are:

- The sentence is represented vertically from the root - the first F1.
- The central column directly below this root is the key meaning content of the sentence.
- Discourse requirements called for a passive sentence at this point in the text.
- The root, theme, first Focus and the *start here* of the sentence is *experiments*.
- The rest of the sentence is the rheme and information about F1.
- *Experiments* is part of a noun pathway: adjective + noun
- Then follows a verb pathway, realised as: verb Be Do Form + verb Be Do-ing Form + verb Done Form + prospective to + verb Do Form
- The Done Form *conducted* reflects back to *experiments* because it is a Done Form and because it follows forms of *Be* - this is the essence of the passive.
- The prospective *to* links *conducted* and *develop*.
- The verb *develop* is associated with *plants*, as we need to *develop something*. This is a non-adjacent meaning association.
- The noun *plants* is part of a noun pathway realised as adjective + noun + relative clause.
- Note the direction of the arrow connecting *plants* and the relative pronoun *that*. The whole relative clause is associated with the noun so the arrow goes from *that* to the noun, not from the noun to the relative clause.
- The noun *plants* is also the second Focus [F2] and the whole noun pathway [from *food* to *water*] is information about it.
- This noun pathway contains a verb pathway in the relative clause: modal modifying verb + verb Do Form.
- The Do Form *tolerate* has a non-adjacent meaning association with *water*: *tolerate something*.

- The noun *water* has its own noun pathway: noun + conjunction + noun + noun.

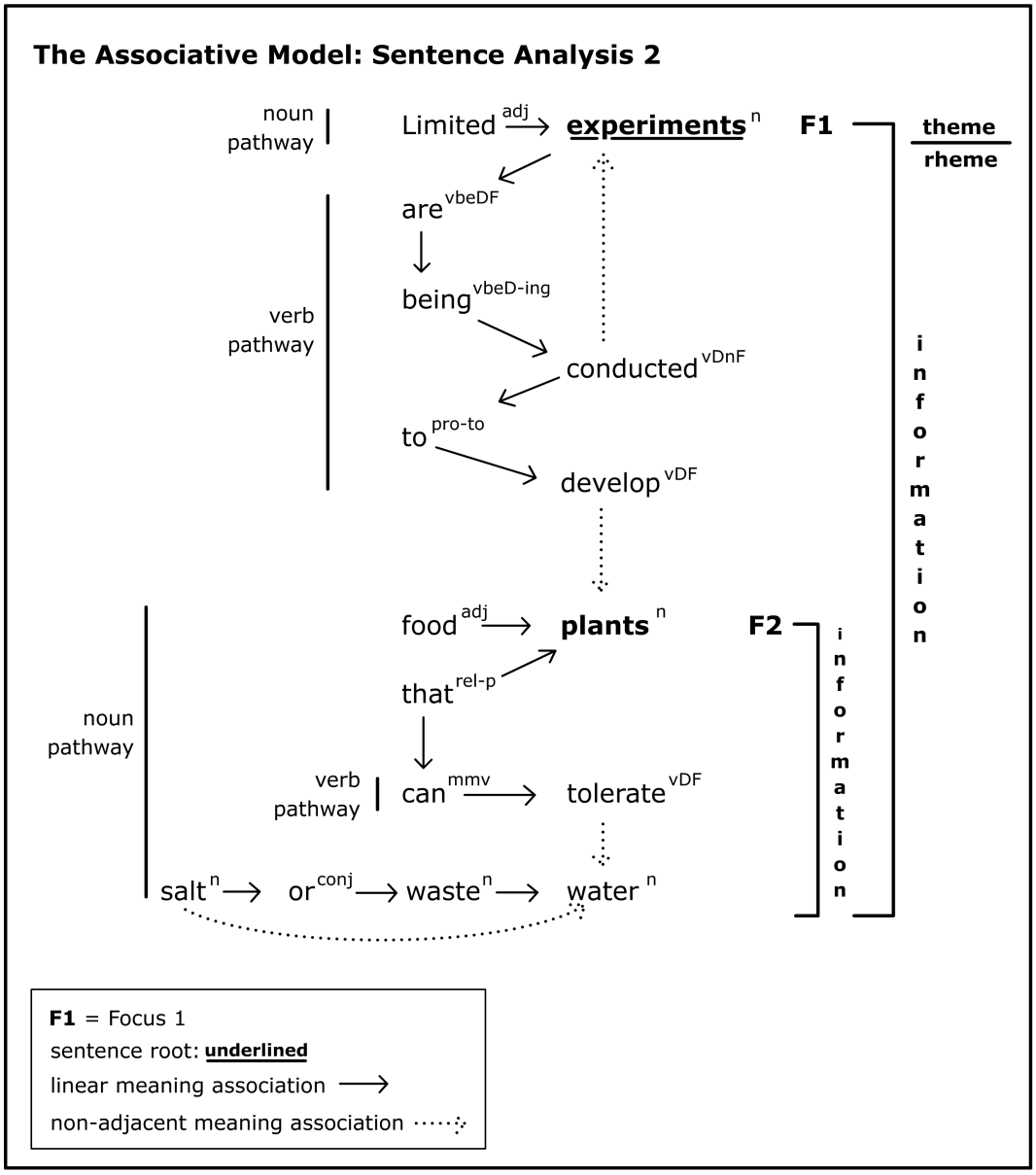


Figure 8.1: The Associative Model: Analysis 2

This part of the grammar will explore these verb and noun pathways in more detail.

While the ideas of the example sentence can be combined in conventional English, some ideas cannot be combined [e.g. **I will could do it.*]. Some *could* be combined but are not because such a combination doesn't add anything new to the idea without this combination. An important general convention is that we use the simplest form [or combination of forms] to express the idea we want. This convention suggests that we will tend to use Do Forms rather than Be + Do-ing Forms unless there is a specific reason for doing so, and, if we look at the data, that is what we find. Do Forms are much more frequent than Be + Do-ing Forms. Other ideas have to be combined in particular ways e.g. the order of adjectives in a noun pathway, and verbs in a verb pathway.

What then *can* and *should* we teach learners about the conventional combinations of words? Well, there are five main areas.

1. Verb forms are combined in conventional sequences: verb pathways.
2. Time phrases need to be congruent with verb time-distance ideas.
3. Nouns need to be identifiable.
4. There are conventional ways in which nouns can be modified: noun pathways.
5. Questions [asks] are different from statements [tells].

We will now look at these five areas before considering some other areas [conditionals and reported speech] which are generally considered to be different or difficult but in actual fact are not, as they use the same meaning and distance conventions as the rest of the language, and then finally conclude by discussing how to approach the language we do not explicitly teach.

8.3 The Power Conventions of Verb Pathways

We have already seen how some verbs can be combined. We have looked at the *Be + Do-ing Form* combination and we have considered *Have + Done Forms*. The conventions of the sequence mean that we cannot have a *Done Form + Have* or a *Do-ing Form + Be*, for example. Here we will consider the power conventions of verbs and how the order in which they are combined is constrained by the conventions of English and how meaning is built up. There are a small number of verb pathways of choices which determine which verbs can be used [or not] as the speaker chooses. The fundamental principle here is that meaning is added by adding verbs to the sequence and the whole meaning is revealed at the end of the sequence as an accumulation of meaning, and the prospective choices available to the speaker are restricted by the choices already made.

Power Convention 1

The first verb in a main verb phrase is *always* marked or unmarked for distance of some kind. There are two forms: unmarked Do Forms or marked Did Forms.

(8.3.1) I live here. [*live*: Do Form: Close]

(8.3.2) I lived there. [*lived*: Did Form: Distant in time]

(8.3.3) I can do it. [*can*: Do Form: Close]

(8.3.4) If I could do it.... [*could*: Did Form: Distant in reality]

(8.3.5) Could you help me please? [*could*: Did Form: Distant in formality]

Power Convention 2

Modal/modifying verbs always come first when they are used because they are the closest to the speaker as they are a filter which represents the speaker's perspective on the following ideas.

Power Convention 3

Modal/modifying verbs are always followed by an unmarked Do Form as the modal/modifying verb itself is [un]marked as close or distant and the following verbs do not need to be.

(8.3.6) I could do it. [*could*: distant: potential]

(8.3.7) I must leave now. [*must*: close: necessary obligation]

(8.3.8) I should go. [*should*: distant: desirable]

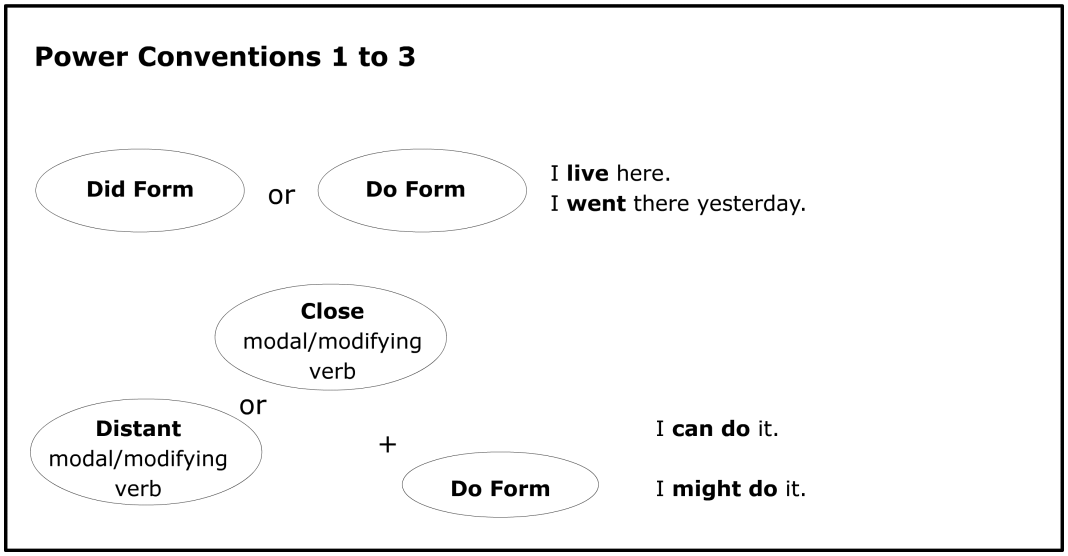


Figure 8.2: Verb Power Conventions 1 to 3

Power Convention 4

Do or Did Forms can be followed by a prospective *to* + Do Form. This adds a prospective idea.

(8.3.9) I want a car. [Factual + noun]

(8.3.10) I want to go to Disneyland. [Factual + prospective]

(8.3.11) I wanted to go to Disneyland when I was a boy. [Distant in time factual + prospective]

The *prospective to* links the first verb with the following verb in a sequence. The following verb may be a Do Form or another sequence of verbs.

(8.3.12) I want to be leaving soon.

(8.3.13) I hope to have finished by then.

(8.3.14) We need to be going soon.

Power Convention 5

Do or Did Forms can be followed by a Do-ing Form. This adds an idea of the *do-ing* of the activity and while the Do-ing Form used in this way is generally considered to be a noun [a gerund or verbal noun] the sequence belongs here in this analysis of the verb sequence because of the verbal *do-ing* idea of the form.

(8.3.15) I like reading.

(8.3.16) I liked reading when I was younger.

Plus modal/modifying verb:

(8.3.17) He might like reading.

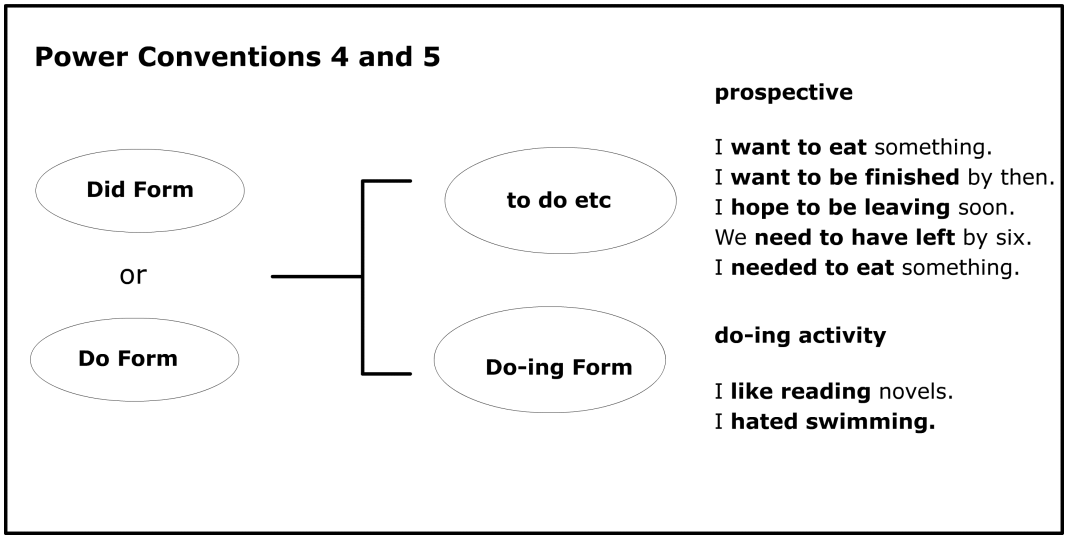


Figure 8.3: Verb Power Conventions 4 and 5

Power Convention 6

The condition marker *be* can be followed by a Do-ing Form. The Do-ing Form has an idea of the condition being *in progress* and thus unfinished. The utterance time is *inside* the event time of the on-going condition.

(8.3.18) He is writing a book. [Close]

(8.3.19) He was writing a book. [Distant]

Plus modal/modifying verb:

(8.3.20) He can't be writing a book.

Power Convention 7

The condition marker *be + Do-ing Form* can be followed by *to* + Do Form. The *to* + Do Form adds a prospective idea to the on-going condition. The utterance time is still within the event time of the on-going condition.

(8.3.21) I am going to see her later. [Close]

(8.3.22) I was going to see her later. [Distant]

As mentioned in Power Convention 4, the *prospective to* links the first verb with the following verb in a sequence. The following verb may be a Do Form or another sequence of verbs.

(8.3.23) I'm going to be seeing her later.

(8.3.24) I'm hoping to be finished soon.

The *to* sequence can be extended more than once.

(8.3.25) I'm going to have to sack him.

Plus modal/modifying verb:

(8.3.26) I might be going to see her later.

Power Convention 8

The condition marker *be + being* [the Do-ing Form of Be] is always followed by an adjective or a Done Form. The adjective adds information about the quality of the *being* process. The *being + Done Form* adds the idea of the on-going process moving *towards* a done condition and this process is being enacted on the subject of the sentence [because the verb Be reflects everything back on the subject].

(8.3.27) He is being stupid. [+ adjective]

(8.3.28) He is being watched. [+ Done Form]

(8.3.29) The road is being repaired. [+ Done Form]

(8.3.30) The road was being repaired yesterday. [Distant]

Plus modal/modifying verb:

(8.3.31) He might be being watched.

(8.3.32) The road could be being repaired.

The 'Passive'

This combination of *be + being + Done Form*, which seems so complex to learners, is easy to understand if you understand the idea of *Be*. In statements, *Be* reflects what follows the verb back on the subject. This applies to all forms of *Be* in a sequence - *the reflecting back idea* is carried on through the sequence.

The Done Form is the resulting condition of the subject of the sentence. If there is a verb between *Be* and the Done Form, this verb tells us about the journey to the Done Form resulting condition. The *being* in *I am being followed* tells us that the condition is part of an on-going process towards the end condition: to when the following is over.

The whole of the passive relies on the condition idea of *Be*. This allows us to focus attention on the subject of the sentence rather than the doer of the action.

Like the '*passive*' forms in Conventions 9, 13 and 14 below, the sequence in Power Convention 8 is a stand-alone sequence of a combination of ideas [one added after the other by the speaker's choice] and is *not* a transformation.

Power Convention 9

The condition marker *be* can be followed by a Done Form. The Done Form adds the idea that the condition of the subject of the sentence is completed.

(8.3.33) He is finished.

The process is over: He is working. He is finishing. He is finished.

(8.3.34) She is excited.

The process of exciting her is over: her current condition is one of excitement.

(8.3.35) The road is closed.

The process of closing is over.

(8.3.36) The road was closed.

The process of closing is over as it was done in the past. Distant.

Plus modal/modifying verb:

(8.3.37) He might be finished.

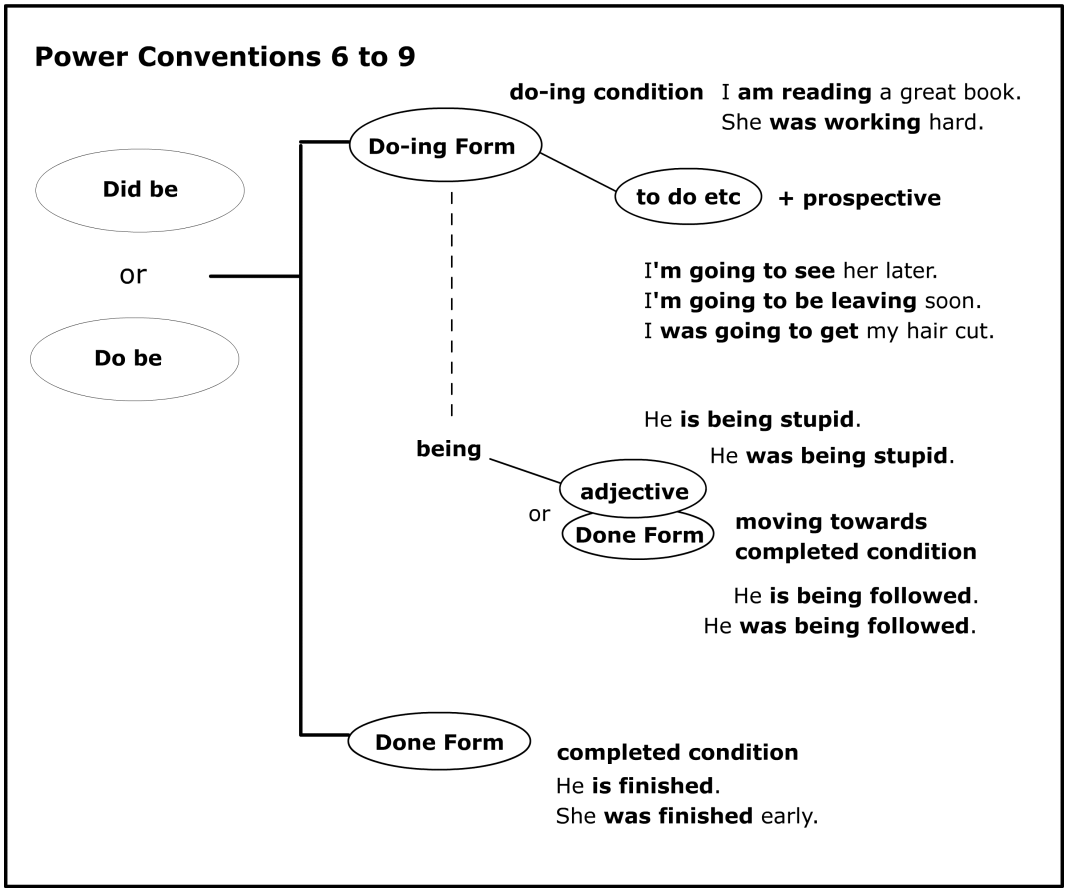


Figure 8.4: Verb Power Conventions 6 to 9

Power Convention 10

The possessive *have* can be followed by a Done Form. The Done Form adds the retrospective idea of completion.

(8.3.38) He has arrived.

Possession + completion of action [retrospective: before now].

(8.3.39) He had arrived early.

Distant possession + completion of action [retrospective: before then].

Plus modal/modifying verb:

(8.3.40) He might have arrived.

Power Convention 11

The possessive *have* can be followed by *been* [the done form of the condition marker Be: *been*]. This adds the retrospective idea of the completion of a condition [acting on the subject of the sentence]; followed by a *prepositional to*, or preposition of place e.g. *there*, or an adjective.

(8.3.41) I have been to Jordan.

This is possession + completion of condition [retrospective] + prepositional to.

(8.3.42) I have been sick.

This is possession + completion of condition [retrospective] + adjective.

(8.3.43) I have been busy.

This is possession + completion of condition [seen retrospectively] + adjective.

(8.3.44) I had been to Jordan twice before.

Distant possession + completion of condition [retrospective].

Plus modal/modifying verb:

(8.3.45) He might have been to Jordan.

(8.3.46) He might have been sick.

(8.3.47) He might have been busy.

Power Convention 12

The possessive *have* + *been* can be followed by a Do-ing Form [because all forms of the condition marker Be [except *being*] can be followed by a Do-ing Form]. This adds an idea of a *do-ing condition* to the retrospective idea of *been*, which *can* [potentially] therefore be incomplete: i.e. *on-going*.

(8.3.48) I have been thinking about it.

Possession + completion of condition [retrospective] + [modified by] an on-going condition so the condition is *not necessarily* complete.

The *been done condition* loses its completion idea when post-modified by a Do-ing Form but maintains the retrospective idea.

(8.3.49) I had been thinking about it for a long time before I finally agreed.

This example shows distant possession + completion of condition [retrospective: before then] + [modified by] an on-going condition – an extended process ended by the information in the second clause: *before I finally agreed*.

Plus modal/modifying verb:

(8.3.50) She might have been thinking about it.

Power Convention 13

The possessive *have* + *been* can be followed by a Done Form. This adds an idea of the resulting condition enacted on the subject of the sentence [because, in statements, *been* reflects what follows it back on the subject, as it is a form of Be]. These are further examples of the '*passive*' and depend on the reflective meaning idea of Be.

(8.3.51) He has been arrested.

(8.3.52) He has been shot.

(8.3.53) She has been sacked.

(8.3.54) She had been shot.

Plus modal/modifying verb:

(8.3.55) He might have been arrested.

(8.3.56) He might have been shot.

(8.3.57) She might have been sacked.

Power Convention 14

The possessive *have* + *been* + *Do-ing Form* can be followed by a prospective *to* + Do Form.

(8.3.58) I have been meaning to go there for some time.

This is possession + completion of condition [retrospective: before now] + [modified by] an on-going condition so the condition not necessarily complete + prospective idea.

(8.3.59) I had been meaning to go there for some time before I finally decided to go.

This example shows distant possession + completion of condition [retrospective: before then] + [modified by] an on-going condition – extended process + prospective idea ended by information in second clause: *before I finally decided to go*.

Plus modal/modifying verb:

(8.3.60) She might have been meaning to go shopping.

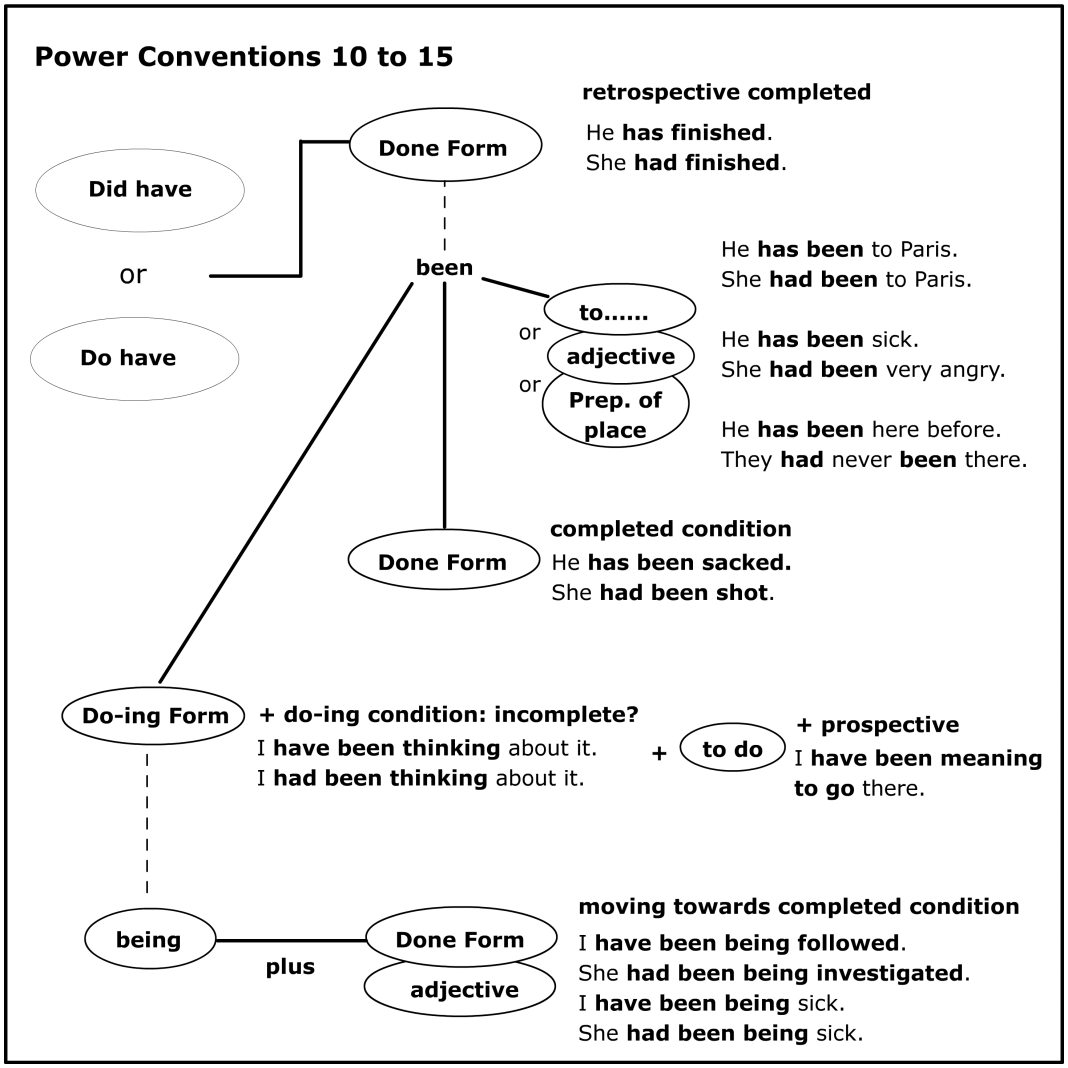


Figure 8.5: Verb Power Conventions 10 to 15

Power Convention 15

The possessive *have* + *been* + *being* [Do-ing Form of Be] is always followed by a Done Form or an adjective. The Done Form adds an idea of the on-going process moving towards the resulting condition: all being enacted on the subject of the sentence.

(8.3.61) I have been being followed.

This is possession + done condition [retrospective: before now] + do-ing process moving towards resulting condition.

(8.3.62) He had been being followed for three days before we lost him.

This is possession + done condition [retrospective: before then] + do-ing process moving towards resulting condition. This is a very rare combination because the *being* does not really add more important information to the sequence of ideas without it. Compare:

(8.3.63) I have been followed.

(8.3.64) I have been being followed.

In fact, if you google '*have been being*' you will find more pages which try to explain the '*form*' than pages with real examples on. These real examples include:

(8.3.65) My friends have been being really judgemental. [+ adjective]

(8.3.66) I have been being sued for child support for over twenty years.

(8.3.67) We have been being ripped off for longer than we think.

Such combinations are also difficult to say and probably to process.

Plus modal/modifying verb:

(8.3.68) I might have been being followed.

Verb Conventions Summary

The prospective grammar approach does not see verb phrases as a collection of discrete forms e.g. present continuous, past perfect, past perfect continuous passive to be selected and used, consciously or subconsciously ['*To say this I need to use the Present Perfect which is have + past participle so here we go....*']. That is a retrospective view of grammar - a view of structures and uses. Instead, in reality, we have a potential pathway of verbs and decisions and choices.

The first decision to be made is whether to use a Do or Did form of a modal/modifying verb, or a Do or Did Form of Be or Do or Have, or a Do or Did Form of another verb. This decision leads onto further choices which are constrained by the choice already made as these first choices limit the possible bonds which can be made.

Using the fifteen power conventions outlined here all main verb form sequences can be constructed - just by choosing which word to add to the sequence in conventional ways. It is a simple and elegant system and even beautifully economical. As long as you know and understand the lexical meanings of the verbs you want to use [*run*, not *walk*], the meaning of Do, Be and Have, the meaning of the modal/modifying verbs and the form meanings of Do, Did and Doing and Done Forms [especially *be*, *being* and *been*] then you can understand any verb sequence. The conventions of the sequence have established allowable paths through the combinations of verbs so that there are now set conventional sequences of verbs, with a combined accreted conventional meaning, which English language users are now primed to expect and to produce in order to be understood. This will now be shown in a series of tables, commentaries and pathway diagrams.

Verb Pathways

As you look through the seemingly complex diagrams which follow, bear in mind that this apparent complexity is the result of a single additive process [word + word] and the diagrams represent the knowledge which results from a long process of learning. The diagrams should never be presented *to* learners but they could possibly be built up over time *with* the learners.

Do Form Pathway

Table 8.1 shows simple Do Forms + to do or do-ing verb. All verbs can be used as in [1], with or without an object or complement. Some collocate with + *to* + *do* as in [2]; others with a Do-ing Form of the verb [3] and some with the Do-ing form of the verb + *to* + *do* [4]. Other continuations are possible of course as we saw in Power Convention 4 [e.g. *I want to have finished by 6 pm*]; + *to do* is illustrative.

		Do	Been	Do-ing	Done	to	Do	Example w/o modal
1	[Modal]	want	-	-	-	-	-	I want you
2	[Modal]	want	-	-	-	to	do	I want to go
3	[Modal]	like	-	do-ing	-	-	-	I like fishing
4	[Modal]	like	-	do-ing	-	to	do	I like learning to swim

Table 8.1: Do Forms

The Do Forms verb pathway in Figure 8.6 is a pathway of choices. We can choose to omit verbs and to exit the pathway at different points. The shortest sequence is just the Do Form: *I want you*. The longest is Modal/Modifying Verb + Do Form + Do-ing Form + to + Do Form: *She might like learning to swim*.

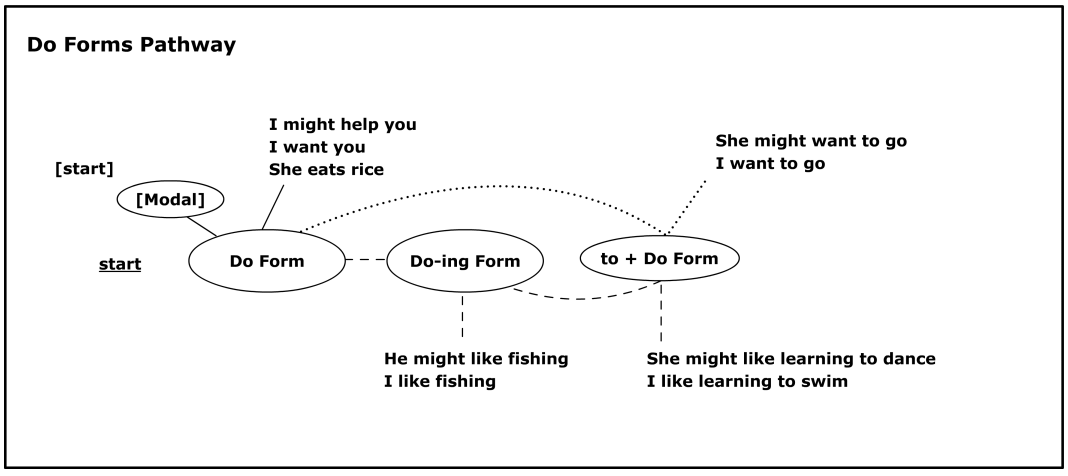


Figure 8.6: Do Forms Pathway

Did Form Pathway

Switching now to the distant Did Forms of the verb we can see from Table 8.2 that the possible bondings parallel those of the previous Do Forms Pathway but the modal modifying verb collocation does not happen.

	Did	Been	Do-ing	Done	to	Do	Example
1	want	-	-	-	-	-	I wanted you
2	want	-	-	-	to	do	I wanted to go
3	like	-	do-ing	-	-	-	I liked fishing
4	like	-	do-ing	-	to	do	I liked learning to swim

Table 8.2: Did Forms

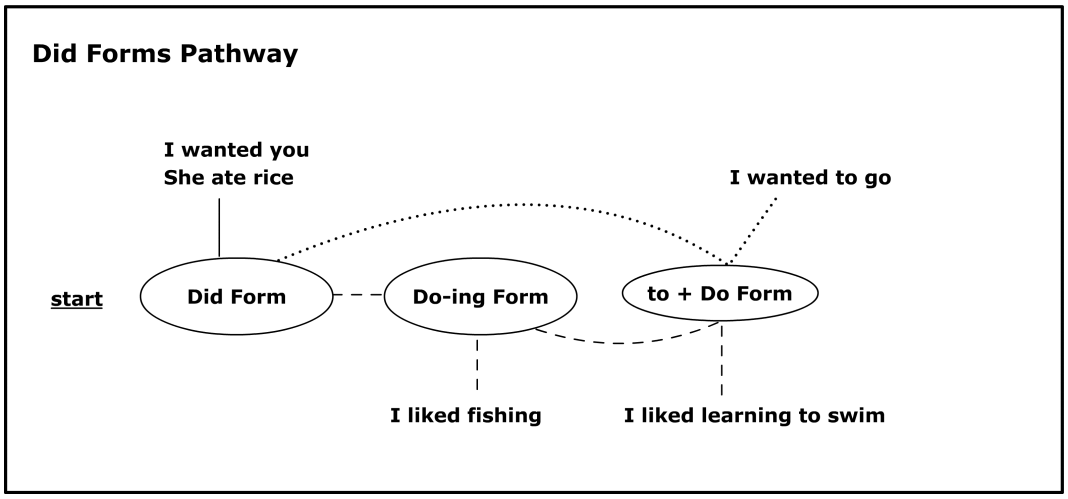


Figure 8.7: Did Forms Pathway

Again we can chose to omit forms and exit when we want, depending on the meaning we wish to communicate. The shortest sequence is just the Did Form: *I wanted you*. The longest is Did Form + Do-ing Form + to + Do Form: *She liked learning to swim*.

Do Be Form Pathway

Table 8.3 illustrates the close Do patterns of the verb *Be*. The verb can be used on its own as a Do Form [1] and + *to* + *do* [2] and + *Do-ing* [3] and *Do-ing* + *to* + *do* [4] just like other Do verbs above but it also has other collocations [5-8]. Note, as mentioned earlier, *Be* does not collocate with *Been*.

		Be	Been	Do-ing	Done	to	Do	Example w/o modal
1	[Modal]	be	-	-	-	-	-	I am happy
2	[Modal]	be	-	-	-	to	do	He is to leave
3	[Modal]	be	-	do-ing	-	-	-	I am thinking
4	[Modal]	be	-	do-ing	-	to	do	I am going to do it
5	[Modal]	be	-	being	-	-	-	He is being stupid
6	[Modal]	be	-	being	done	-	-	I am being followed
7	[Modal]	be	-	being	done	to	do	He is being followed to see...
8	[Modal]	be	-	-	done	-	-	I am finished

Table 8.3: Do - Be Forms

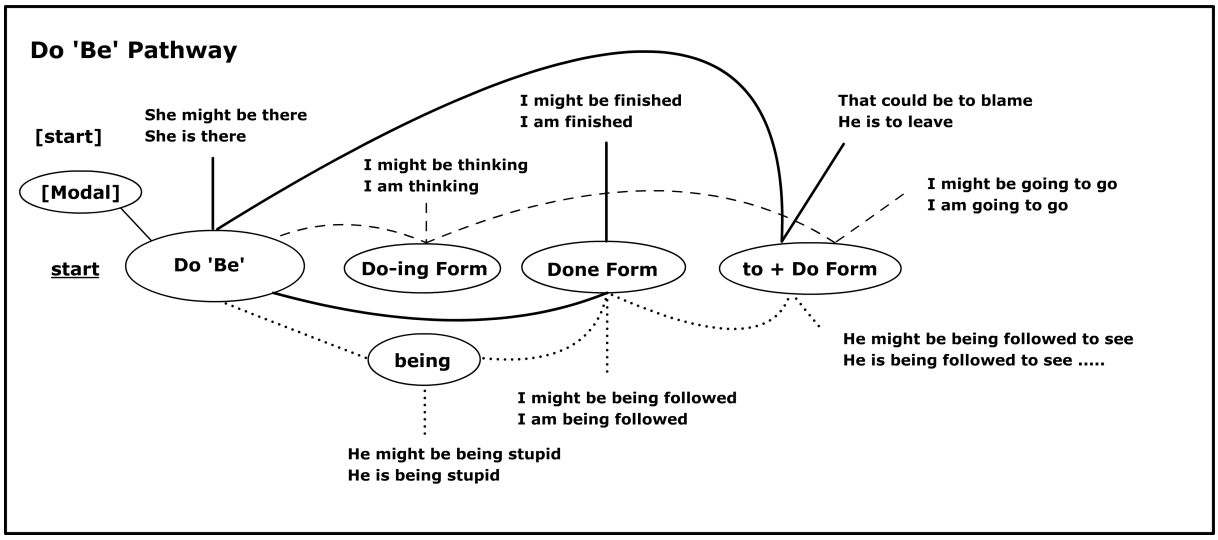


Figure 8.8: Do Be Pathway

Be can collocate with *to* + *do*; with Do-ing Forms; with *being* and with Done Forms. Do-ing Forms [except *being*] do not collocate with Done Forms. *Done Forms* can collocate with *to* + *do*. These are possible collocations but whether particular verbs *do* collocate depends on the lexical meaning of the verb - not just the form. The shortest pathway is *Be* as a Do Form: *She is there*. The longest is Modal/Modifying Verb + Do Be Form + being + Done Form + to + Do Form: *He might be being followed to see....*

Did Be Form Pathway

Distant *Be* forms [shown in Table 8.4 below] show exactly the same possible collocation bonding as the close *Be* forms above without the modal modifying verb bonding.

	Be	Been	Do-ing	Done	to	Do	Example
1	was	-	-	-	-	-	I was happy
2	was	-	-	-	to	do	He was to leave
3	was	-	do-ing	-	-	-	I was thinking
4	was	-	do-ing	-	to	do	I was going to do it
5	was	-	being	done	-	-	I was being followed
6	was	-	being	done	to	do	He was being followed to see...
7	was	-		done	-	-	I was finished
8	was	-	-	done	to	do	I was asked to help

Table 8.4: Did - Be Forms

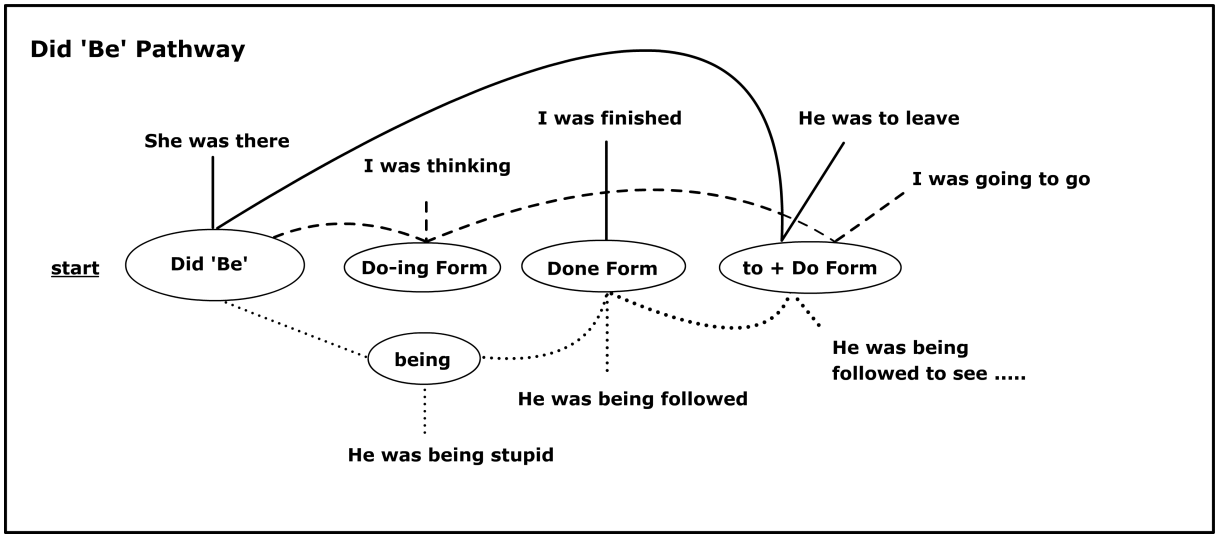


Figure 8.9: Did Be Pathway

Did Be Forms mirror Do Be Forms and the possible collocations, steps and exits are the same.

Do Have Form Pathway

Close *Have* forms [Table 8.5] behave as other close forms [1 and 2] but collocate with Done Forms [3] and [the Done Form] *been* [4-12] to build retrospective ideas. Examples 11 and 12 are possible but very rare because the idea of *being* does not add much more to 6 and 7.

		Have	Been	Do-ing	Done	to	Do	Example w/o modal
1	[Modal]	have	-	-	-	-	-	I have a dog
2	[Modal]	have	-	-	-	to	do	I have to go
3	[Modal]	have	-	-	done	-	-	I have finished
4	[Modal]	have	been	-	-	-	-	I have been there
5	[Modal]	have	been	-	-	to	do	I have been to see the Queen
6	[Modal]	have	been	-	done	-	-	I have been arrested
7	[Modal]	have	been	-	done	to	do	He has been punished to teach..
8	[Modal]	have	been	do-ing	-	-	-	I have been thinking
9	[Modal]	have	been	do-ing	-	to	do	I have been meaning to go
10	[Modal]	have	been	being	-	-	-	I have been being stupid
11	[Modal]	have	been	being	done	-	-	I have been being followed
12	[Modal]	have	been	being	done	to	do	He has been being followed to see...

Table 8.5: Do - Have Forms

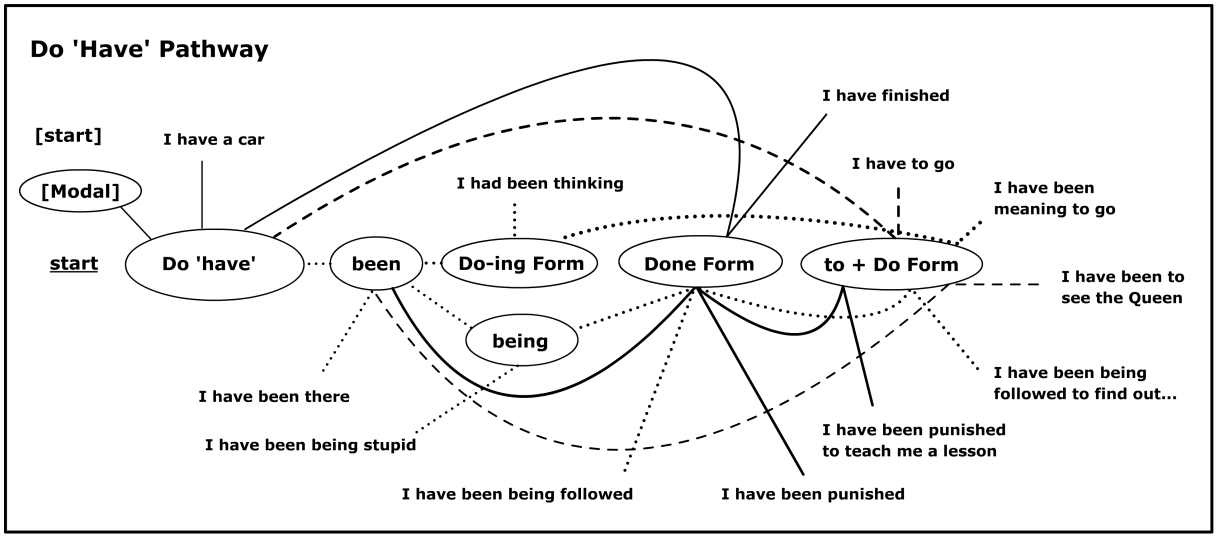


Figure 8.10: Do Have Pathway

Have collocates with *to + do*; with *been*; with Done Forms. *Been* collocates with Do-ing Forms, *being* and Done Forms. *Being* collocates with Done Forms. The shortest pathway is Do Have: *I have a car*. The longest pathway is Modal/Modifying Verb + Do Have + been + being + Done form + to + Do Form: *I have been being followed to find out.....*

Did Have Form Pathway

Distant Had Forms [Table 8.6 below] behave in exactly the same way as close Have Forms but without the modal modifying verb collocation.

	Had	Been	Do-ing	Done	to	Do	Example
1	had	-	-	-	-	-	I had a dog
2	had	-	-	-	to	do	I had to go
3	had	-	-	done	-	-	I had finished
4	had	been	-	-	-	-	I had been there
5	had	been	-	-	to	do	I had been to see the Queen
6	had	been	-	done	-	-	I had been arrested
7	had	been	-	done	to	do	I had been punished to teach...
8	had	been	do-ing	-	-	-	I had been thinking
9	had	been	do-ing	-	to	do	I had been meaning to go
10	had	been	being	-	-	-	I had been being stupid
11	had	been	being	done	-	-	I had been being followed
12	had	been	being	done	to	do	I had been being followed to find...

Table 8.6: Did - Have Forms

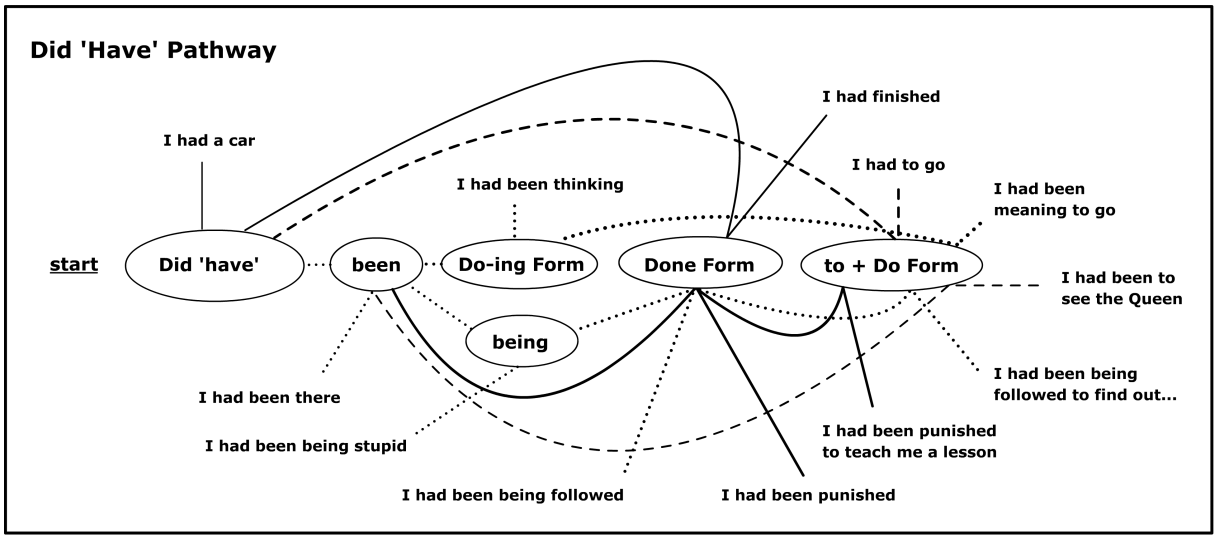


Figure 8.11: Did Have Pathway

Retrospective grammar sees these combinations as a set of structures [identified by more or less abstract labels and defined by rules of use] which the learner needs to learn to use. The prospective view sees these sequences as choices to make on the path to meaning.

Speakers have to choose the path they take to express their meaning. As I have said before - the speakers expresses a word-idea-journey. Listeners have to follow the idea-meaning of each step on the path at a sufficient

level of concentration/accuracy to understand the whole meaning of the sequence. The more familiar a person is with the probabilities of the conventions of the sequence and the context and the co-text the less hard they have to concentrate on the individual words in the sequence.

8.4 The Power Conventions of Time: Distant and Non-Distant

Time is a complex area in English. Just the concept of a day has a number of ideas related to it as the diagram in Figure 8.12 below shows. Time becomes even more complicated when we add grammar to the lexical idea of time phrases.

Remember that the first verb form in a verb phrase is [un]marked for tense-distance: it is either *close* or *distant*: a Do Form or Did Form, or Close or Distant Modal/Modifying Verb.

Distant verb forms *may* be distant in time and the co-text or context will tell you if they are distant in time or in another form of distance.

A distant time adverbial or distant context confirms that a distant form refers to time distance [or to unreality in the past] rather than some other form of distance. We can mark ideas in utterances and sentences as being distant in time by using distant time words. We can mark other ideas as being close in time by using close time words. It is important for learners to know when to use time words so that there is no contradiction between ideas in their sentences or utterances.

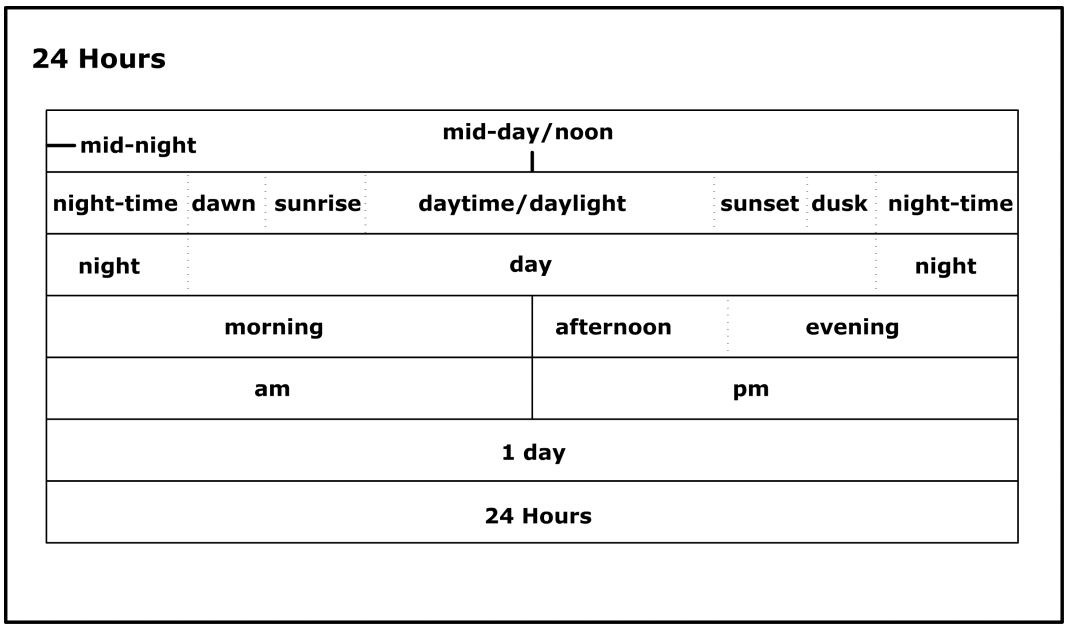


Figure 8.12: One Day: 24 Little Hours

Realisation and Discussion

(8.4.1) I like you.

Close Do Form; no time word or conflicting co-text: close time by default.

(8.4.2) A: What did you do yesterday?

B: I went shopping.

Distant Did Form and distant [past] time word in question sets time context. Distant Did Form [*went*] used in response.

Past time is marked as distant. All other times are close i.e. *not distant*. This includes the future, which is only ever seen from here and now, except when we pretend we are talking about future facts.

The exact reference of many time phrases will depend on the utterance time and the speaker's perspective. The phrase - *this morning* – can be used with *prospective*, *here and now*, *retrospective* or *past time distance* ideas.

At 6 am, when I wake up, I can see this morning as *prospective* from here and now, even though technically morning started at 00.01 am. It is indeed *my* morning from the time I wake up:

(8.4.3) I *have to* do lots of work *this morning*.

I can see this morning as *here and now*:

(8.4.4) It *is* beautiful *this morning*.

At, say, 11.40, I can see this morning as *retrospective*:

(8.4.5) I'*ve done* a lot of work *this morning*.

At 1 pm, say, I can only see this morning as past as it is finished and conventionally it has to be combined with a distant form [e.g. wrote]:

(8.4.6) I *wrote* a whole chapter of my book *this morning*.

This is only possible as *this morning* is a past part of *today*, which is still close.

Time and the Cardinal Perspectives

Time phrase ideas should match the cardinal perspectives. For example retrospective ideas are conventionally matched with time phrases which connect *past time + here and now*, e.g. *since then*; not with past time phrases. Past time phrases are used to place distant ideas in distant [i.e past] time.

Sometimes though past time phrases are used with retrospective ideas but this is considered by some writers to be '*unconventional*'. Michael Swan (2011) argues that sentences like this '**Lloyds Bank.... has opened a Home Loan Account for you on 19th May*' - a combination of the '*present perfect*' and a past time phrase are *not* wrong - it is just that '*the rules are not completely true*'. While this is a damning admission against interest as lawyers might say [Why are the rules (your rules) wrong? Whose fault is that?], let us consider whether there actually is a mistake in Swan's example sentence, despite what Swan argues. Take the following example:

(8.4.7) He has been arrested twice - in 1997 and 2010.

The basic pattern is the same: the so-called present perfect, with, in this case, two past time references. What we have though in this example is a combination of two different ideas. The fact that he has been arrested twice is one idea. The dates are other ideas/information. The punctuation [or pause] makes it clear that there is a difference - there is a gap between the ideas, so the distinction between them is clear. And we are moving from a retrospective idea [including the idea of now] to past-time anchored information [not including now]: this direction is important. We could not write the example sentence above like this, no matter how we tried to punctuate it:

(8.4.8) *In 1997 and 2010 he has been arrested twice.

The initial past time phrase anchor precludes the following retrospective idea: once past time has been established we have to stay there until we move on to another idea, like this:

(8.4.9) In 1984 I went to Paris. I've been several times since then.

I doubt that Swan would agree that his example could be rephrased thus:

(8.4.10) *On 19th May Lloyds Bank has opened a Home Loan Account for you.

In Swan's original [written] example there is no punctuation to suggest that there is a distinction between the ideas so we must conclude that it is indeed a mistake. The only way such combinations are grammatically correct is when there is punctuation or pauses to divide the information. If there isn't, it is a mistake.

Just because there is an authoritative citation for such an example [here, Swan's letter from a British bank, presumably staffed by reasonably well-educated native speakers, though one does wonder] does not mean that it is correct. Here is a further example from the BBC:

(8.4.11) *They've already been arrested and locked up for a week in September.

Assignment BBC World Service 29th December 2012

In this example there was no pause between *arrested* and *and* or between *up* and *for* or between *week* and *in* to separate the ideas. One wonders if this was a case of an unscripted mistaken elision:

(8.4.12) They've already been arrested / and (were) locked up for a week in September.

Just because such examples can be cited does not make them grammatically correct or a model to follow. The following examples are all from BBC World Service broadcasts. This does not make them correct.

(8.4.13) *It is almost impossible to talk to the Arab League observers without the Syrian Authorities not knowing.

BBC World Service News 06.00 GMT 29th December 2011

Unscripted? Slip by journalist?

(8.4.14) *Russian President Vladimir Putin is visiting Israel at the start of his first tour of the Middle-east since becoming re-elected in March.

BBC World Service News 04.30 GMT 25th June 2012

Scripted. Mistake; corrected two hours later, as shown below.

(8.4.15) Russian President Vladimir Putin is visiting Israel at the start of his first tour of the Middle-east since being re-elected in March.

BBC World Service News 06.30 GMT 25th June 2012

Michael Swan's correspondent at the bank does not know how to use English properly. Neither does the BBC employee who wrote the original Putin sentence.

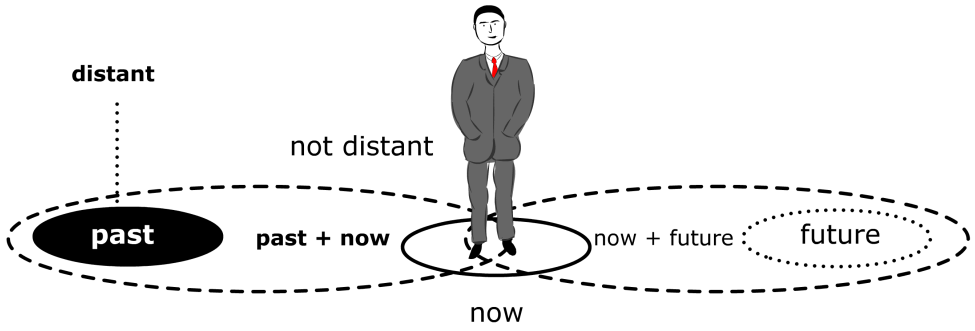
Time Divisions

There are five divisions in time, each with associated time phrases. as shown in Figure 8.13 below.

What your learners need to know

- Time has the same two divisions as the tense-distance system has [close and distant] but many more sub-divisions.
- Tense-distance tells us if an idea is close or distant.
- The verb itself and the words it combines with in the co-text and the information we have from the context tell us what *kind* of distance is meant, if any.
- Time phrases place [or anchor] an idea more precisely in time and combine with the four cardinal perspectives.
- Generally, past time phrases cannot be used with close verb forms unless when telling a joke which is not really in the past because a joke is fiction: *Oh, last week a man goes into a bar.....*
- Your learners need to know the time phrases and when they are conventionally used.

Power Convention: Time



Past	Before now/ up to now	Now	Period of time	Future
Period of time		today	**from now**	this afternoon
	Period of time	now		this weekend
for two years		this morning	today	next week
for a long time	for two years		by 5 pm	tonight
	since 2006		this morning	tomorrow
from 2000	since then		this afternoon	
to 2006	this morning		this evening	during
	this week		this weekend	the holidays
Point in time	today			
	all my life		by the end	the day after
just now	this last week		of the week	tomorrow
a minute ago				
yesterday	**Vague point**		for the	this time
last night	**in time before**		next two weeks	next month
last week	**now**			
on Tuesday			**Vague point**	next week
at Christmas	just		**in time**	in 2040
in 2006	recently		**after now**	on Saturday
in the 1970s				at the weekend
			soon	Tuesday week
			later	
			not now	

Figure 8.13: Time and Time Phrases

8.5 Power Conventions of Nouns 1: Nouns Must be Identifiable.

Nouns need to be identifiable. If we do not know what a noun refers to we cannot understand what is being said. This is the key idea of the noun – it *must* be clear enough. Sometimes nouns are identifiable *enough* on their own but at other times they need to be marked by one or more of a set of words so we can identify them. These words are *identifiers* [traditionally known as *determiners*]. Once nouns have been identified enough they can be further defined or modified in other ways, as we shall see below in Power Conventions of Nouns 2. In this section we shall explore the idea of identifying nouns.

Realisation and Discussion

Some nouns do not need to be marked so that we can identify them – it is already clear enough what they are.

(8.5.1) Sarah is a beautiful girl. [You and I know Sarah.]

(8.5.2) France is a lovely country. [You and I know France.]

(8.5.3) Tigers are endangered. [You and I know about tigers in general.]

This can change, however, and these nouns might need further identification when their reference idea is different.

(8.5.4) I'm not sure the Sarah I know is the one you know.

(8.5.5) The France I know is not the inner cities but the beautiful countryside.

(8.5.6) The tigers over there came from other zoos.

In each of the three examples above the noun has been made more specific for it to be understood. The noun becomes a specific one [or a group - *tigers*] which has been defined [the Sarah I know; the France I know; the tigers over there], and this will be discussed further later. This specificity is pre-marked by '*the*'.

Vienna

Another similar device is to use the so-called '*indefinite article*' to mark a noun as one of a set.

(8.5.7) He grew up in a Vienna of high inflation and unemployment, intrigue, and political violence.

This *Vienna* is marked as a particular *one* from a set of many Viennas which could be identified and selected from throughout history. The particular Vienna marked by an '*a*' above is then described [*of high inflation*....] as it is not just *Vienna*. It is not Vienna now or Vienna of all history, or a Vienna surrounded by Turks and about to be relieved by Sobieski's Polish cavalry.

The ideas of this example sentence (8.5.7) could also be expressed with Vienna marked by *the*.

(8.5.8) The Vienna he grew up in was dominated by high inflation and unemployment, intrigue, and political violence.

Here, Vienna is defined as the one he grew up in, just like France was defined above, and then further described.

Learners need to understand that it is the idea of the noun which is pre-eminent and that 'rules' such as '*do not use a/an/the with the names of countries or cities etc.*' only apply when one does not need, for meaning reasons, to use *a/an/the* with such nouns. The rules are only true until they are not. When you *do* need to use *a/an/the* with such nouns to express the meaning you want then you do use them.

Language in use is more sophisticated than the short-cut rules imply. Learning long lists of which words to use with *the* and *a/an* with [or not] is difficult to do in itself and is limiting because the long lists are not the whole story: the rules are, in the damning words of Michael Swan (2012), '*not completely true*'.

Identifying Nouns

We can identify nouns, *if they need to be further identified*, in several ways.

1. By pointing to them as close or distant: *this* book; *that* book; *these* books; *those* books
2. By numbering them: There are *ten* books missing. This is the *first* time I've been here.
3. By specifying a quantity: I have *some* books with me. [also *much, many, some, few, any* etc.]
4. By possessing them: That is *my* book. Here is *your* book. [also *his, her, their, mine* etc.]
5. By naming their owner: That's *John's* car.
6. By identifying them as one of many possible ones of the class/type: Look! There's *a* rabbit.
7. By identifying them as the one [of the class/type] we know: There's *the* moon.
8. By identifying them as the one [of the class/type] which will be known [defined] later: *The* thing I want most in the world is to kiss you; *The* one I mean.

Conventions of the Sequence: Identifiers

If you choose to use more than one identifier with a noun then there is a set order (Biber et al, 1999) which people conventionally follow.

(8.5.9) the many ways
(8.5.10) a little loving
(8.5.11) both your first cousins
(8.5.12) double the last offer
(8.5.13) twice a week
(8.5.14) the first ten years
(8.5.15) this other guy
(8.5.16) some money
(8.5.17) the first few people
(8.5.18) the same three men

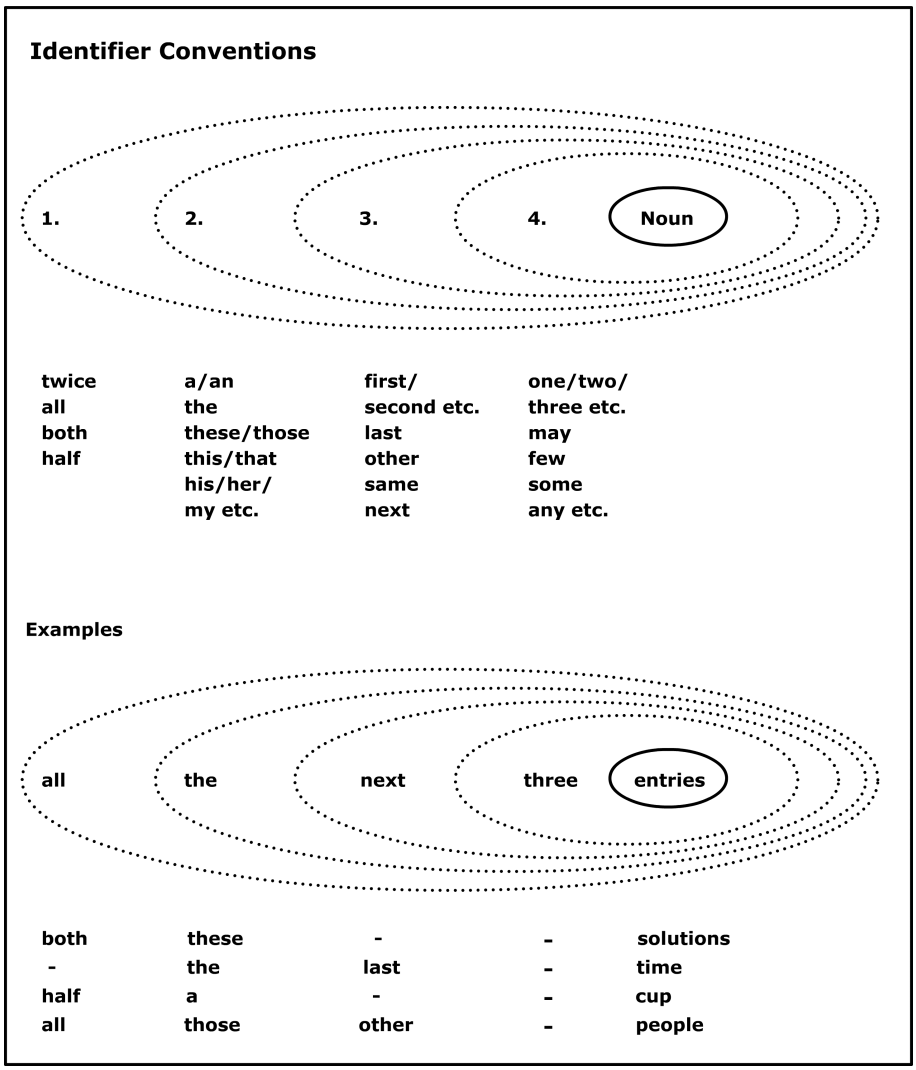


Figure 8.14: Identifier Conventions

These conventions of the sequence for identifiers are shown in Figure 8.14 below - you will notice the parallels between these conventions and the conventions of the sequence for adjectives before nouns. Each identifier

applies to *all* those that follow, up to and including the noun, and the closer the identifier is in the sequence to the noun the more essential the meaning relationship is, just like adjectives defining a noun. The word '*three*' belongs closer to '*entries*' than '*next*' and so on. These are another part of the larger pathway of choices for nouns.

However, the picture is more complicated as not every identifier can follow the one before it - in fact the details of the sequence are too complicated to describe in a meaningful pedagogical grammar for language learners. There is no short-cut to learning the grammar and collocations of each noun.

More about the Definite Article The so-called definite article, *the*, marks, essentially, the noun that *we know* already [*the moon*] or *will know*, because it is going to be identified [e.g. *The one I mean*]. Learners often have problems with when to use *the*, perhaps because they are taught a long list of rules like '*do not use the with the names of countries*', which, as we saw in the examples above, is not a particularly useful rule except for test-taking as the test example will invariable test the rule. This rule and its test become a circle of mendacity: we have the rule so we can test it and as we'll test it we have to teach it. We *can* use '*the*' with country nouns, in express contradiction to the 'rule', when we want to refer to it as a defined country which I and you therefore understand, in opposition to others. In the example above, France was imagined into a set of Frances and the one I know was identified [defined] against the other Frances which other people might know. There are, in fact, as many Frances as there are people who have visited that beautiful country.

Let us look more closely at the use of nouns with and without *the*, bearing in mind the three ideas that (1) nouns need to be identifiable enough, (2) *the* marks nouns are the one you know already or (3) the one you will know when you are told which one it is..

Identifiable Enough: Name + Type/Type + Name

Certain specific nouns in the collocation *name + type* or *type + name* do not normally need *the* as they are considered specific enough to be known.

Named Islands:

(8.5.19) Pitcairn Island

(8.5.20) Easter Island

Places like Easter Island need the full name - as *Easter* has another meaning: we cannot say '*I am going to Easter for my honeymoon*.' Note that other islands can be known by their name only: e.g. *Skye*, *Mull*, *Bute*. These are elided forms of the full name: *the isle of Skye* etc.

Streets and Roads:

(8.5.21) London Road

(8.5.22) Regent's Street

(8.5.23) High Street

High Street is the name of the street. People live at *11 High Street*: this is clear enough for the post office to deliver their mail. When we talk about going to '*the High Street*' we are talking about a particular High Street as the one we know and thus marked with '*the*', in the same way as we talk about *the moon*. Note that in Britain people can also talk about some streets as '*the high street*' when they have another name; then '*high street*' means the main street in the town.

Mountains

(8.5.24) Ben Nevis

(8.5.25) [Mount] Everest

(8.5.26) Annapurna

(8.5.27) Scarfell

(8.5.28) Mount Blanc

Some European mountains need *the*: *the Matterhorn*; *the Eiger*. This is a matter of history and translation conventions.

Waterfalls and Lakes:

(8.5.29) Victoria Falls

(8.5.30) Angel Falls

(8.5.31) Loch Lomond

(8.5.32) Lake Ontario

These nouns are named and seen as identified enough in this way. They do not normally need *the*. Some lakes are known by their name only e.g. Windermere. A *mere* is a kind of lake so *lake* is not necessary as it is already in the name. The name is definition enough to identify it. Someone living there would have to be clear enough in what they say to avoid confusion between Windermere the lake and Windermere the village.

The One We Know

When we mark a noun with *the* and nothing else then we are marking it as the one we know; the most likely one of our shared existence; the most obvious one.

(8.5.33) I'm just popping out to the shops.

(8.5.34) I went to the doctor today.

(8.5.35) The train was late.

(8.5.36) Let's meet at the cinema.

(8.5.37) I'll see you in the pub.

(8.5.38) The moon looked beautiful last night.

(8.5.39) There are some more shop closures on the High Street.

The Defined Noun

Some nouns in some circumstances do not need *the*. Abstract nouns like *love* can be like this.

(8.5.40) Love is all you need.

When we need to define such nouns to make them knowable we need to mark this with *the*, as we saw with the Sarah, France and tiger examples, or another identifier. *The* signals that the noun will be knowable because we will be told what it is. Compare:

(8.5.41) Love is a many splendoured thing.

(8.5.42) The love I have for you is infinite.

(8.5.43) Their love is very fragile.

(8.5.44) Politics is a nasty business.

(8.5.45) The politics of personal destruction is a dangerous game.

(8.5.46) John's politics are not very coherent.

Sometimes this definition can come before the noun.

(8.5.47) Look on the first page.

(8.5.48) I live in the tallest building.

The Type of a Name/Thing

Some nouns are defined in the pattern *the + type/kind etc. + of + name/thing*. The *name/thing* part tells us exactly which of the type we are talking about.

(8.5.49) That's the type of car I'd like to buy.

(8.5.50) That's the kind of silly remark I don't like.

(8.5.51) That's the sort of thing I'm talking about.

(8.5.52) the best of times, the worst of times

(8.5.53) the politics of personal destruction

In the first three examples, above the noun [*car, remark* and *thing*] had to be further clarified to be understood: e.g. *the car I'd like to buy*.

Cities can also be named in this pattern:

(8.5.54) the city of London

(8.5.55) the city of Westminster

(8.5.56) the city of New York

These cities can also be known just by their name: *London*, *Westminster*, *New York*, in which case they do not need *the*: the name is identification enough but here they are defined as a member of the class of cities.

Certain countries, which are collections of states or countries:

(8.5.57) the United States of America

(8.5.58) the United Kingdom of England...

These can be shortened but the *the* remains: *the US*; *the UK*.

Some republics are also known in a similar pattern:

(8.5.59) the Republic of Cyprus

(8.5.60) the Republic of Ireland

These *Republics of* can be shortened without *the*: *Cyprus*; *Ireland*.

Isles can also be named in a similar pattern:

(8.5.61) the Isle of Wight

(8.5.62) the Isle of Skye

(8.5.63) the Isle of Mull

As mentioned above these can be known by their name only, if there is no confusion: *Skye* and *Mull* are said; *Wight* is not.

Some newspapers are also *of a place*:

(8.5.64) the Times of London

(8.5.65) the Times of India

Newspapers are interesting because the name is often shortened. '*The Times of London*' is known as '*the Times*'. A British person would have to specify *the Times of India* if that is what they meant. An Indian in India might not. Is the New York Times referred to as '*the Times*'? If so, by whom and where? Maybe only by people in New York as there are also other US Times newspapers such as the Washington Times and the LA Times; referring to any of these indiscriminately as '*the Times*' might result in confusion. Remember we identify a noun enough so that the person reading or listening understands the reference. In a novel the writer might refer to *the Times*, and, if the setting is Britain, they would probably mean *the Times of London* and an American reader would have to understand that. Halfway across the Atlantic at 30,000 ft, talking to an American I might have to specify *the London Times* or *the New York Times* or *the Washington Times* etc.

Geographical regions can also be known as *of a country*:

(8.5.66) the north of England

(8.5.67) the south of Scotland

These can also be shortened as long as the meaning is clear: *the north*.

Kings and queens are of the country they rule:

(8.5.68) the Queen of England

Shortened to *the Queen* as long as the meaning is clear.

The Noun in Opposition to Other Members of the Class

Some nouns, like in the examples below, are always defined in relation to other members of the class and so need *the*. These include hotels, museums, theatres, deserts, mountain ranges and oceans.

Example	Full Name	Opposition/Type
the Pacific	the Pacific Ocean	the Atlantic Ocean/Oceans
the Sahara	the Sahara desert	the Gobi desert/deserts
the Himalayas	the Himalayan Mountains	the Andes/mountain ranges
the Ritz	the Ritz Hotel	the Hyde Park Hotel/hotels
the Palace Theatre	the Palace Theatre	the Theatre Royal/theatres
the British Museum	the British Museum	the Getty Museum/museums
the North Pole	the North Pole	the South Pole/poles
the Czech Republic	the Czech Republic	the Gabonese Republic/republics
the seventies	the nineteen seventies	the sixties/decades

Table 8.7: Examples of Nouns in Opposition

All the kinds of nouns above need to be defined by their names in opposition to other members of the class so *the* is required as a marker of this, except in the cases where the nouns are used [adjective-like] to describe/define other nouns:

(8.5.69) There have been ten cyclones in the Pacific Ocean this year.

(8.5.70) Pacific Ocean currents are weaker this year.

(8.5.71) The new play at the Place Theatre is fantastic.

(8.5.72) Palace Theatre employees went on strike yesterday.

(8.5.73) The British Museum is London's best.

(8.5.74) British Museum exhibits attracted 2 million visitors last year.

However, if the noun ideas [of *currents*, *employees* and *exhibits* for example] change then a *the* might be required.

(8.5.75) The Pacific Ocean currents we measured are weaker this year.

(8.5.76) The Palace Theatre employees who went on strike have been sacked.

(8.5.77) The new British Museum exhibits attracted 2 million visitors last year.

The River Name/the Name River

Rivers are different from other geographical features in that they can be named in two different ways.

(8.5.78) the river Thames

(8.5.79) the Thames river

Rivers are like newspapers in that they can be referred to by their name alone: *the Thames*. In England, though, it might not be enough to talk about '*the Avon*' [a river] because there are several river Avons. If you were writing about fishing in England in general you would have to write about '*the Hampshire Avon*', for example. If you lived in Hampshire and were talking about '*the Avon*' then it would be understood that you were talking about the Hampshire Avon and if you weren't you would have to say so. Remember that the meaning idea of the noun must be clear enough to be understood. Interestingly, the word Avon is derived from the Celtic word for river so the river Avon is the river river.

The Spanish Problem[1]

Some people see confusion with nationalities and languages and article use. If we think about the basic principle of nouns - that they must be identifiable enough for understanding - these problems should disappear.

[1] Known as 'the Spanish Problem' because a Spanish teacher asked me about it.

(8.5.80) Spanish is a lovely language.

'*Spanish*' as a '*standalone*' noun is always understood as the language, just like *English*, *German* etc.

(8.5.81) The Spanish language is wonderful.

Here the noun is *language*; *Spanish* is an adjective [or a noun acting as an adjective?] which tells us which language we are talking about, thus the need for '*the*': *the Spanish language* as opposed to other languages. The language is defined - by the word *Spanish*.

(8.5.82) The Spanish he speaks is like a strange mixture of Mexican Spanish and Castillian Spanish.

Each *Spanish* here has been defined enough for us to understand: *his Spanish* [*the Spanish language he speaks*], and described by adjectives: *Mexican Spanish* and *Castillian Spanish*.

(8.5.83) Spanish people are not happy.

Here the noun '*people*' is modified by the adjective '*Spanish*' and this is enough to tell us we are talking about Spanish people in general, those living in Spain. This is the default understanding. You could also write: *The Spanish people are not happy*. However, these are both different from:

(8.5.84) The Spanish people over there are not happy.

These Spanish people are defined as a group [*over there*], contrasted to other groups of Spanish people who may be perfectly happy.

(8.5.85) The Spanish are not happy.

The Spanish [people] in general, not the French [people]. Here '*the Spanish people*' [noun: *people*] has been elided to '*the Spanish*'. As '*people*' has been defined as '*Spanish people*', when it is elided, it needs '*the*' to avoid the confusion which would result if the sentence below were used.

(8.5.86) *Spanish are not happy.

Remember that *Spanish* is the language, so what does this sentence mean? It doesn't mean anything because the presumed noun [*Spanish*] is not clear enough.

In each example we make the noun understandable enough for our purposes.

The Whale

Let us return to Alexander's whale we met in Part Three. His teacher corrected Alexander's sentence from *The blue whale is the world's largest animal* to **A blue whale is the world's largest animal*, by presumably applying the short cut rule: '*Use 'a' for the first mention, 'the' for the second.*'

The singular noun *whale* is not identifiable enough on its own, though *whales* are. The singular noun *whale* has abstract potential meanings until it is co-textualised.

Whales

Whales in plural are identifiable as whales in general: *Whales are large mammals which live in the sea*.

A Whale

A whale can be a particular whale: *Look! There's a whale*.

One particular whale might be '*that whale over there*'. Or '*this whale here*'. There might be ten or more whales; all identifiable enough.

Or *a whale* might be '*a large marine mammal*' [there are other large marine mammals]; it can't be '*the* world's largest animal' as *a whale* is *a* representative member of the class - not the class itself.

The Whale

The whale, on the other hand, can be *the whale*, not *the dolphin*, *the lion* or any other species of animal. This *whale* is a stereotypical representative of the class of animals known as whales. It is defined by its name, just like *the Pacific Ocean* or *the British Museum* are defined as particular oceans or museums by their names. *The whale* is defined in opposition to other classes of animals [not *the fox*] so it can be '*the largest marine mammal*'.

Or you might want to say: '*Look at the whale over there - it's quite unusual*.'

The context and co-text will tell you which of the two '*the whale*' ideas is meant: *the whale* in general [not *the dolphin*] or *the particular whale* you are talking about.

Learners have to *learn* how to make nouns *mean*. Are they identifiable enough on their own or do they need to be identified more for the meaning of the speaker/writer to be expressed?

The Zero Article

Note that the so-called zero article is just the lack of something which is *not* necessary: the noun is identifiable enough without an article. It is completely nonsensical to talk about '*using a zero article*'. You cannot *use* something which does not exist. And if, for some reason, you make a further distinction between *not* using '*the*' and *not* using '*a/an*', then words fail me. The focus should be on the meaning of the noun and whether a '*definite article*', for example, is necessary [or not] to signal that the noun is knowable because it is defined or will be defined.

Errors with articles

Often people argue that mistakes with *the*, *a* and *an* are not important and, like third person '*s*', they are a redundant feature of the language and the context and co-text can allow a speaker to cope with any ambiguity. Interestingly enough, such arguments are never made about grammatical features of other languages. No-one ever says '*Let's drop all those case endings in Estonian. They are tricky things to learn and they are not really necessary for communication.*'

Identifiers and Learning Nouns

Throughout the above discussion I have been careful in noting '*if there is no confusion*' or '*as long as the meaning is clear*' as it is the clarity of the noun which is paramount. Identifiers are sometimes necessary, sometimes not. Learners can and should learn when they are needed.

Learners, therefore, need to focus their attention on the meaning ideas of nouns. What do I want this noun to mean? Does the noun need an identifier to help it mean what I want it to mean? Learners need to learn to make sure the nouns they use are clear enough for the listener/reader to understand. Learning short-cut rules of article use does not achieve this. More time and attention needs to be paid to making the meaning of nouns clear, and this involves exploring how this is done in every lesson. Learners also need to be aware of the conventions of the sequence for nouns: what order the identifiers can come in: part of the larger noun pathway of choices.

8.6 Power Conventions of Nouns 2: Noun Pathways

Identifiers are used to identify nouns but they are only one of the sets of words which can come before a noun; and there are other words and phrases which can come after a noun and these can all help to *identify* or *modify* a noun. These make up the rest of the pathway of choices for nouns.

Noun pathways can be extraordinarily complex and we need to remember the Association and Placement Principles of the Associative Model to make sense of them, and the fact that nouns need to be identifiable

enough. Words are associated with other words and, in English, placed close to each other to make this association clear. In the constructed example below for example, the prepositional phrase *from the Himalayas*, which helps identify the noun *salt*, needs to be placed immediately after the noun to make sense. It belongs closer to that noun than the *which you add* clause which is related to the root noun of pinch but the *pinch of what* needs to be defined first.

(8.6.1) The pinch of highly refined pink rock salt from the Himalayas which you add before cooking should be slightly warm.

Figure 8.15 below shows this sentence analysed according to the Associative Model.

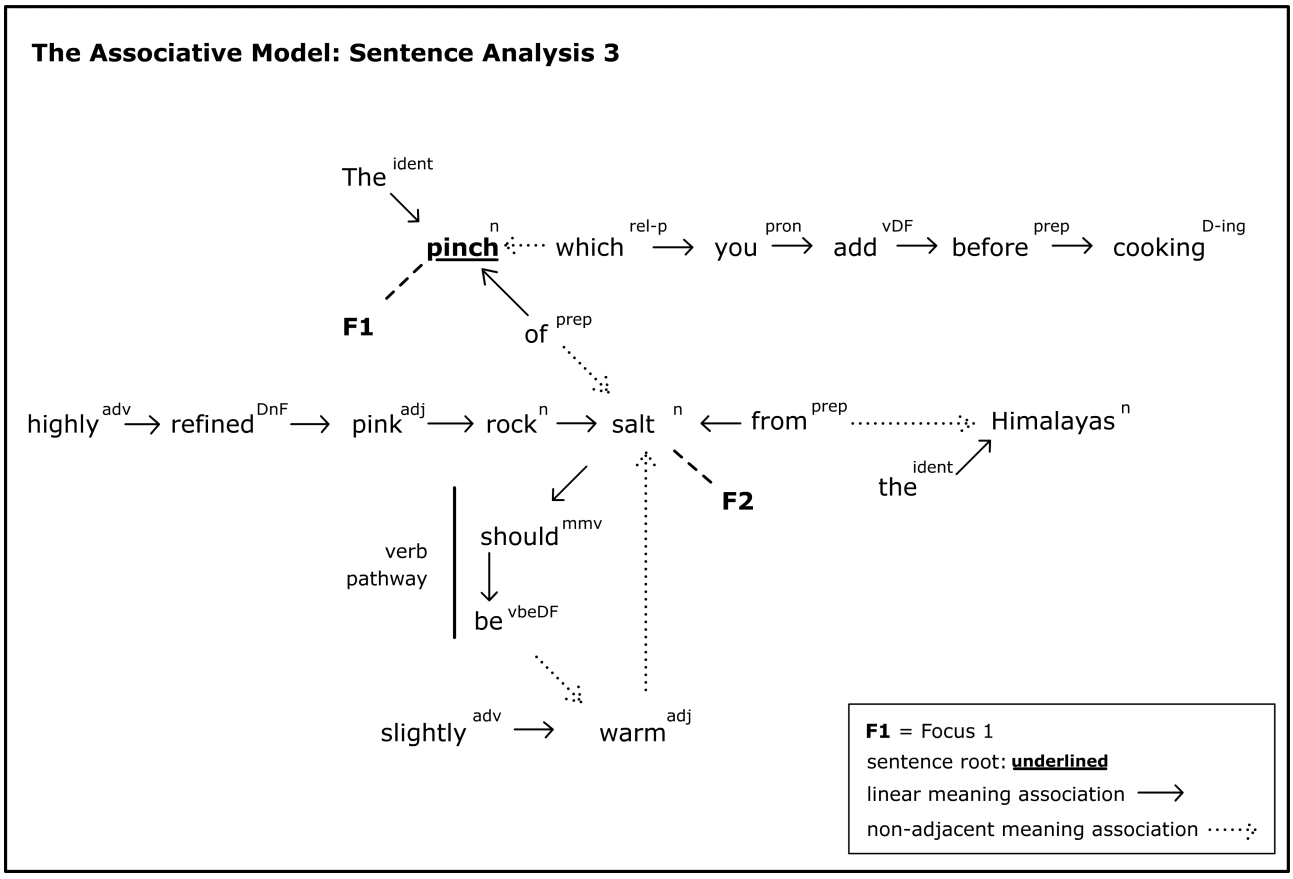


Figure 8.15: The Associative Model: Analysis 3

The first *the* tells us that the next noun [*pinch*] will be identified, and it is. The noun *pinch* is identified [a pinch of *what*?] and in doing so it itself helps identify the noun *salt* [a *what* of salt?]. The central or primary noun of the sentence is *pinch* and the which relative clause phraserelates to this noun. The noun *salt* is also precisely identified in a number of ways - by adverbs and adjectives before the noun and by a prepositional phrase. Compared to verb pathways, noun pathways of choices are potentially even more complex. Elements of the noun pathways of choice are shown in Figure 8.16 below.

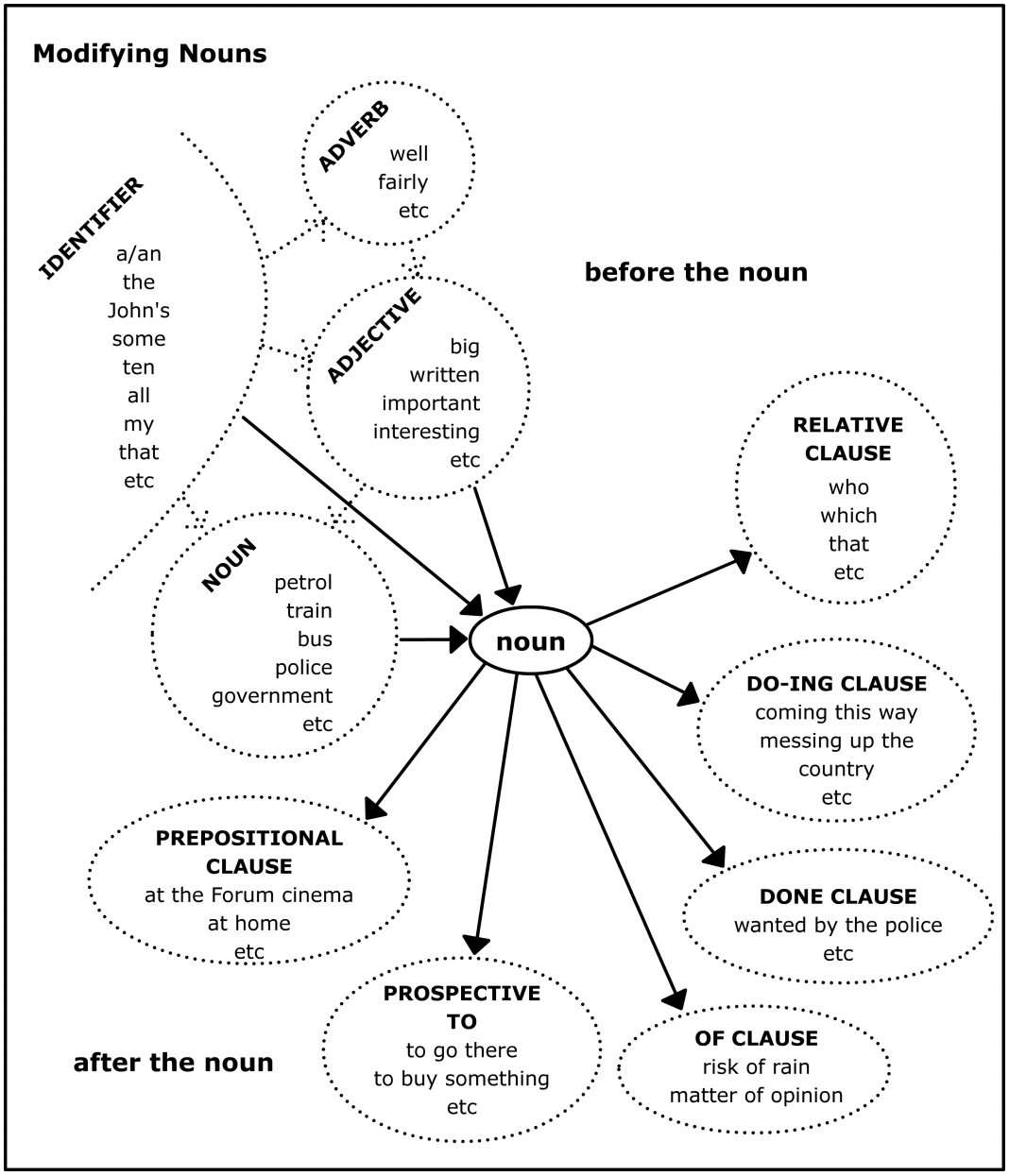


Figure 8.16: Modifying Nouns

The speaker has a choice of how to identify or modify the noun and can choose their path through the conventional sequence of elements in the noun pathway of choices.

Before the Noun

Adverbs and Adjectives

As we have seen in the Spanish Problem a noun can be modified/defined by adjectives before the noun [e.g. *Mexican Spanish*]. These adjectives can, in their turn, be modified by adverbs. The adverb modifies the adjective which modifies the noun. This is slightly different to the sequence of identifiers or adjectives in which each identifier or adjective seems to encompass all the following adjectives or identifers [*a big black chair; all those other people*] . The adverb modifies the following adjective alone [a *very big* chair] because we could not omit the adjective and leave the adverb [*a *very* chair] as the adverb depends on the adjective, not the noun.

These features of the language, like identifiers above, are all about the conventions of the sequence in relation to the meaning of the noun.

(8.6.2) He's a fairly tall man.

Nouns

Nouns can identify/modify other nouns.

(8.6.3) The petrol station is over there. In front of the train station.

Some argue that here the first noun [*petrol*] is an adjective. The distinction is not important but if you want to call it an adjective you should really call it '*a noun acting as an adjective*'. A test to see if it really is an adjective would be to try to use an adverb like *very* with the noun/adjective. If *very* can be used then it is an adjective: **very petrol station*. From this test we can see that *petrol* is a noun. The word *autumn* in '*a lovely autumn day*' seems to be an adjective or at least a very adjective-like noun because it can pass this test: *a very autumn day*.

Identifiers, adverbs, adjectives and nouns [acting as adjectives] can all be used according to the conventions of the sequence as shown above, and like in the example below.

(8.6.4) Have you read that very important security report?

Further complexities can [exaggeratedly] be added:

(8.6.5) I've just read the most wonderful and extremely readable historical novel.

This has the sequence of *identifier + adverb + adjective + conjunction + adverb + adjective + adjective + noun*. The repeated collocation of *adverb + adjective* is most noticeable here.

After the Noun

We can identify/modify the noun in a number of ways after the noun.

Defining relative clauses

By their very label it is clear that defining relative clauses help identify the noun. They follow the noun and clarify its meaning reference. The traditional analysis of these clauses is broadly correct.

(8.6.6) The man I saw yesterday has been murdered.

In the example above '*The man*' is not identification enough. '*The*' marks *man* as something known or, as in this case, something which *will* become known i.e. with the following relative clause: [*who*] *I saw yesterday*. The noun is specified as something which will be knowable and then defined by the following relative clause to make it knowable - the relative clause fulfils the promise of '*the*'.

The Done Clause and Do-ing Clause examples below are reduced relative clauses.

Done clauses

(8.6.7) There are no qualifications required for this position.

(8.6.8) There are no qualifications which are required for this position.

(8.6.9) I think I saw that man wanted by the police.

(8.6.10) I think I saw the man who is wanted by the police.

(8.6.11) I read the report written by the committee.

(8.6.12) I read the report which was written by the committee.

In all these examples the Done clause provides further information or clarification about *something done* or *decided before* to the noun.

Do-ing clauses

(8.6.13) They are the politicians messing up the country.

(8.6.14) They are the politicians who are messing up the country.

(8.6.15) Do you see the man coming this way?

(8.6.16) Do you see the man who is coming this way?

(8.6.17) He hit a lorry travelling in the other direction.

(8.6.18) He hit a lorry which was travelling in the other direction.

In all these examples the Do-ing clause provides further information or clarification about something *in progress* concerning the noun.

Prepositional phrases

(8.6.19) I saw Act of Valor at the Forum Cinema in Riga.

This example contains two prepositions of place in sequence after the multi-word noun of *Act of Valor* - with the more specific first [at the name + cinema], then more general next [in city].

Prospective to clauses

(8.6.20) We have some time to kill.

(8.6.21) I have two reports to write by tomorrow.

(8.6.22) I have nowhere to go.

These clauses tell us more about the noun in a prospective way: *time to do what*?

Of clauses

(8.6.23) That's a matter of opinion.

(8.6.24) As a matter of fact I disagree.

(8.6.25) There is a risk of rain.

(8.6.26) There are a number of errors.

(8.6.27) You run the risk of being caught.

These *of clauses* can in themselves be very complex as we saw in the rock salt example at the beginning of the section, and then it becomes a matter of discussion as to which is the primary noun. Learners need to *learn the noun*: what it can mean *and* how it is used to make it mean what they want it to mean. They need to understand the conventions of the sequence of *identifiers*, *adverbs*, *adjectives* and *nouns* before nouns and which clauses can follow nouns. Every time they meet a noun again they will either extend or reinforce their knowledge of it.

The Power Conventions of Marking Questions

There are two basic sentence forms: a *tell* and an *ask* [Brazil, 1995]. We have mainly looked at tells [statements] so far in this grammar and learners will learn about the statement sequence from the examples given and the texts they meet in their learning, and the teacher will focus on the word order as a matter of course. When it comes to teaching questions, that's when problems start. In the Challenges part of the book I rejected the transformational approach to questions [asks]. Transforming statements into questions and visa versa is an error stemming from the particular ideology that some linguists use to analyse and explain language. The Associative Model rejects transformations in favour of *start here* and placement. When using our prospective active grammar we do not think through the transformation of a statement into a question. Instead we choose

to start a question because that is our intention - we need information about something - and the question naturally follows. We choose to *start here*. For this pedagogical grammar the question then is how should we approach questions?

Questions are different to statements. *Asks* are different to *tells*.

Questions: Start Here Placement

When we want to ask a question we signal that the utterance or sentence is a question and inform the listener/reader exactly what kind of question it is [and therefore what kind of information we are looking for in the answer] and whether the question is about *close* ideas or *distant* ones. This orientates the listener/reader to the information being asked about and makes it easier to answer the question.

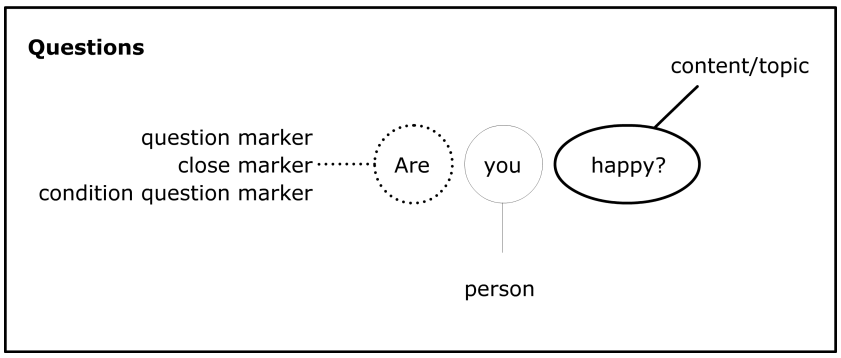


Figure 8.17: Questions

Question Forms

In the example in Figure 8.17 above '*Are*' is the question marker and in this initial position it signals '*this is a question*', and tells us it is a *close* question. As *are* is a form of Be, it also tells us the question is about the *condition* of the subject - and what follows the subject is reflected back onto the subject. All this in one small word.

We give all this information at the beginning of the question – before the specific information content/topic of the question – to give the listener/reader time to evaluate the request and the content of the question. The content requirement of the question is thus framed by the speaker so that the listener is oriented to the request and is therefore in a better position to answer [or perhaps not] the question being asked. A question is easier to answer than a statement said with rising intonation because the listener has been prepared to answer the questions.

Power Convention 1

An initial form of *Be* marks a question as a *close* or *distant condition* question.

(8.6.28) Are you married?

(8.6.29) Is this your car?

(8.6.30) Were you there?

The word order here is different from a statement but is not a transformation of it. The condition marker verb *Be* marks that what follows the subject is about the subject in the same way that it does in statements. *Be* tells the listener/reader to identify the subject and that what follows the subject is about the subject.

Power Convention 2

An initial form of *Do* marks a question as being about the *truth* of an idea – state, action, possession etc.: a *truth-fact question*.

(8.6.31) Do you have any children?

(8.6.32) Do you watch TV?

Power Convention 3

Did marks a question as being about the truth of something distant. Here, distant in time:

(8.6.33) Did you see him?

Power Convention 4

An initial form of *Have* marks a question as being about some kind of possession.

(8.6.34) Have you been to the States? [Retrospective]

(8.6.35) Have you got a cold?

Note that some American and British English speakers are primed to ask this last idea as a *truth about possession* question: *Do you have a cold?*

Power Convention 5

The distant form *Had* marks a question as being about some kind of *distant possession* and, in the example below, because of the co-text '*before*', and in the absence of anything in the context or co-text to tell us otherwise, we assume it is about distant [past] time.

(8.6.36) Had you met him before? [Distant Retrospective]

Power Convention 6

Other forms of questions also signal the kind of information the questioner is seeking and this also gives the person being asked processing time and prepares them to make the appropriate response.

(8.6.37) Can you swim?

A question about *potential*: Do you have the potential to do this?

(8.6.38) Could you swim when you were a boy?

Distant potential: Did you have the potential to do this in past time [given by the content of the question: *when you were a boy*]?

Compare with:

(8.6.39) Could you swim across the English Channel?

Distant Potential: [reality distance, not time]: not many people can swim so far - what about you?

Power Convention 7

If the question is about another idea not covered in Conventions 1 - 6, then we need to signal that idea together with the appropriate form of *Be* or *Do*. We use question words like *what, where, when, why* etc. + *Be* or *Do* or a modal/modifying verb.

(8.6.40) What is your name?

What + *be*: a what condition question.

(8.6.41) When were you there?
When + distant *be* + person: a when distant Be condition question.
(8.6.42) Where do you live?
Where + *do* + person + Do Verb: a where truth-fact question.
(8.6.43) What should I do?
What + opinion marker *should* + person + Do Verb: a what is desirable question.

Power Convention 8

In some questions the word order is the same as for statements:
(8.6.44) Who told him?
In these questions the subject of the question and the question word are the same *who*.

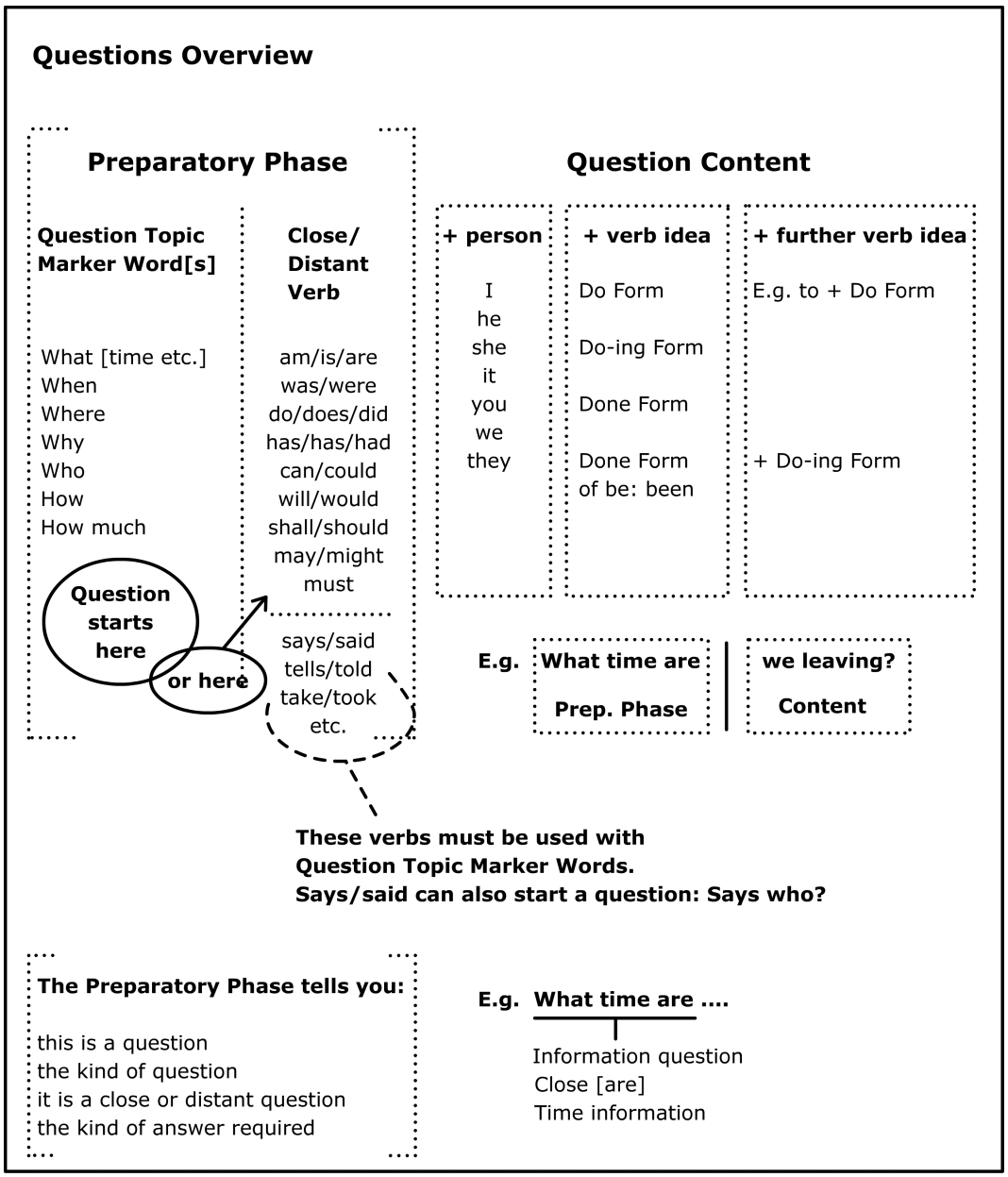


Figure 8.18: Questions Overview

What your learners need to know

- Questions are signalled by the first words you hear or read in a question string.
- The initial word [or two] tells you *what kind* of question it is, *what kind* of information is sought and whether the question is about *close* or *distant* ideas.
- We signal to the listener or reader *this is a question and it is this kind of question so be ready to answer it* at the beginning of the question so they have time to formulate their answer in response to the content of the question, which is delivered later, after the preparatory phase.
- Questions use the same word ideas and form meanings as statements but the word order is completely different for a reason – the question content needs to be framed and the reader/listener prepared to answer the question. Statements are about establishing a subject/focus and giving information about it.
- Questions and statements are distinguished by these differences in the conventions of the sequence.

8.7 Some Notes on Other 'Structures'

Coursebooks and grammars contain many other areas of grammar such as conditionals and reported speech which have been considered to be of such importance and complexity that they are dealt with separately. What of these?

Conditionals

Conditionals have been organised into four types [Zero, 1st, 2nd and 3rd – an abstract labelling system which roughly reflects the order in which they are presented to learners] plus mixed conditionals [as a sop to the complexity of the area]. Learners tend to have great difficulty with these areas and instead of teachers and grammarians asking why this might be so and reflecting on the way conditionals are taught, the area is just considered '*difficult*'. Yet, if you understand the lexical meaning of '*if*' contrasted with '*when*' and you understand Do Forms [factual] and Did Forms [distant factual], [uncomplicated by Present and Past labels], understand the On-going Process, Retrospective and Prospective ideas and modal/modifying verbs e.g. *will* and *would*, then conditionals should present few problems at all - at least not the serious problems learners have at the moment. *Will* and *would* in conditionals have the exact same certainty and distant certainty meanings that they have when used without *if*. Conditionals are difficult for learners because they have been made difficult in particular ways - mainly due to the way verb forms have been taught earlier in the coursebooks. Second conditionals are difficult because the '*simple past*' [aka the subjunctive or the conditional tense] is not used for the '*past*'.

Conditionals as Choice

One simple difficulty is that conditionals are about choice. Which conditional I would choose [below] depends on my personal circumstances.

A student in Europe [viewing the event as likely, possible]:

(8.7.1) If I go to Paris, I'll go to the Eiffel tower.

A Namibian bushman [viewing the event as unlikely or even impossible, but still displaying a more sophisticated response]:

(8.7.2) If I went to Paris, I would go to the Musee d'Orsay.

Conditionals as choice are not emphasised in coursebooks: conditionals are rarely, if ever personalised and most time is spent pattern completing the coursebook writers' conditionals i.e. *other people's* conditionals. Unless learners are asked to produce their own conditionals or to personalise conditionals so they are *true for them*, then conditionals are essentially meaningless. This, of course, goes for everything else, but the more complex something is, the more it should be personalised.

The Zero, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and Mixed Paradigm

Let us look at some other examples. Do these examples fit into the Zero, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and mixed paradigm?

(8.7.3) If he said that, then he lied/was lying.

This example follows the verb patterns of a Zero conditional but in the '*past*' but unlike the supposed Zero conditional, it is not about a general truth but about *specific* past if events.

(8.7.4) If he went there, then he's dead.

Again, this is patterned like a Zero conditional but it is in the past and not about general truths but about specific past if events.

(8.7.5) If he wanted to go, why didn't he?

This is used for prospective in the past but unfulfilled.

(8.7.6) If he [had] wanted to kill her, how could he have done it?

This is used for speculation about the past: here, thinking about method and opportunity.

(8.7.7) If he had wanted to go to the party, he could have gone.

This is used for speculation about unfulfilled past potential opportunity.

All these are examples of '*past*' conditionals. The only '*past conditional*' regularly taught is the 3rd Conditional - a counter factual unreal conditional. None of the examples above really fit into the 3rd Conditional mode, as taught in most coursebooks. Then there is *should*:

(8.7.8) Should you need help, please do not hesitate to ask.

This example uses *should* as a more formal/less likely [both?] *if*. *Should* instead of *if* is rarely taught. While you could argue about the frequency of use of *should* in this way, should a learner come across it they might have problems.

These examples of past conditionals do not fit into the current paradigm. There are too many conditional combinations to be reduced to the 0, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and mixed paradigm and the concentration on *will* and *would* to the exclusion of the other modal/modifying verbs is extremely limiting. Learners will tend not to use other modal/modifying forms to express the full range of possible meanings and will have difficulties understanding conditionals which do not fit into the standard paradigm. The following examples show combinations which are forbidden in the standard model [in the first example: *would after if*] or where there are choices of model/modifying verbs where only one [*will* or *would*] is usually taught.

(8.7.9) If you would be so kind and hold the door for me please?

'Rule': *Do not use will or would after if*.

(8.7.10) If it rains, I will/might/may/could get wet.

(8.7.11) If you help me, I will/can do it.

(8.7.12) If I were you, I should/would apologise.

(8.7.13) If I had a car, I would/could drive there.

Other modal/modifying verbs are possible, with changes in meaning flowing from the meaning-ideas of the particular verb chosen.

Conditional Rules

The '*never use will or would after if*' short-cut rule is easily shown to be inadequate as the first example of the set above demonstrates. *Will* and *would* can be used after *if* to be polite as the following examples show.

(8.7.14) Sit down and shut up.

(8.7.15) Wait here and I'll see if he's free. [Direct]

(8.7.16) If you wait here, I'll see if he's free. [Neutral]

(8.7.17) If you will wait here, I'll see if he's free. [More polite]

(8.7.18) If you would wait here, I'll see if he's free. [Most polite]

The modal/modifying verbs *will* and *would* are used because I want to be sure that you will wait, otherwise I will not bother finding out if he is free. You could argue that these are exceptions and easily taught as polite forms. Yet they rarely are. The following example, though, is not a matter of formality.

(8.7.19) A: John has been stopped for speeding again.

B: Well, if he will drive fast, what does he expect?

The modal/modifying *will* here expresses the speaker's opinion that habitually John chooses [decides: *will certainty*] to drive fast. There are other response options for B of course:

(8.7.20) Well, if he drives fast, what does he expect?

(8.7.21) Well, if he was driving fast, what did he expect?

(8.7.22) Well, if he was driving fast, what does he expect?

(8.7.23) Well, if he was speeding, it serves him right.

Do these fit into the standard conditional model?

The best option in teaching conditionals is to concentrate on teaching the form meaning ideas of English and making the learners aware of how these interact with the distance system and combine with the co-text [e.g. *if*] to produce meaning. Conditionals, like everything else, are about the meaning interaction of context, co-text, word and form meanings and the conventions of the sequence. Words are chosen and placed together for a reason. You need to be able to understand conditionals as you hear or read them, using your active prospective grammar - not to be able to retrospectively identify the form as Zero, 1st, 2nd etc. and then try to remember what these labels tell you about the meaning of what you have just heard, or conversely think about what you want to say and then select a conditional form to do so. Even if you regard the labels as useful ways of referring to the conditionals, four conditionals are not enough and the assorted rules ['*Remember the form is past but the meaning is not*'] are less than satisfactory.

The Four Cardinal Perspectives

All the four Cardinal Perspectives can be used in conditionals.

(8.7.24) [Fact] If he calls, let me know.

(8.7.25) [Retrospective] If he has finished, let me know.

(8.7.26) [Prospective] If he has to leave early, that's ok.

(8.7.27) [On-going Process] If it's raining when you arrive, call me.

Seven Example Conditionals

Let us look at seven example conditionals which show the interplay between time distance and reality, degrees of likelihood and modal/modifying verb meaning.

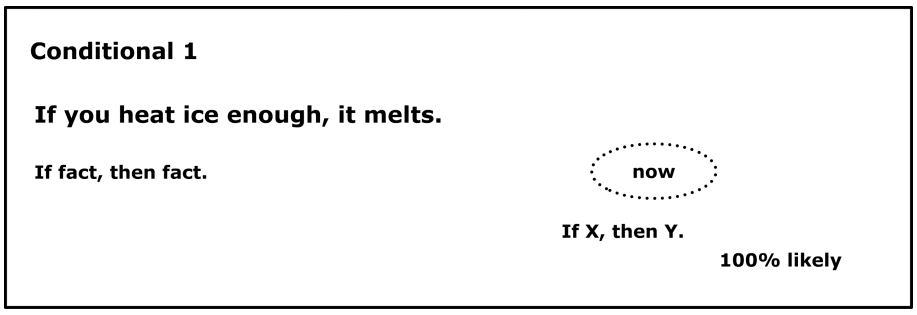


Figure 8.19: Conditional 1

This is an example of the traditional Zero Conditional [Figure 8.19]. As this is purely factual it is seen as 100% likely. This is exactly the same verb pattern [*If + present simple, present simple*] as the example cited above [8.8.24]: *If he calls, let me know*. Some might quibble and say that *let* is the imperative form, but in this grammar both are about facts. One is about a general factual sequence, the other a specific factual sequence. The lexical content determines which is which - not the grammatical formulation; both are about factual sequences: *If fact X, then fact Y*.

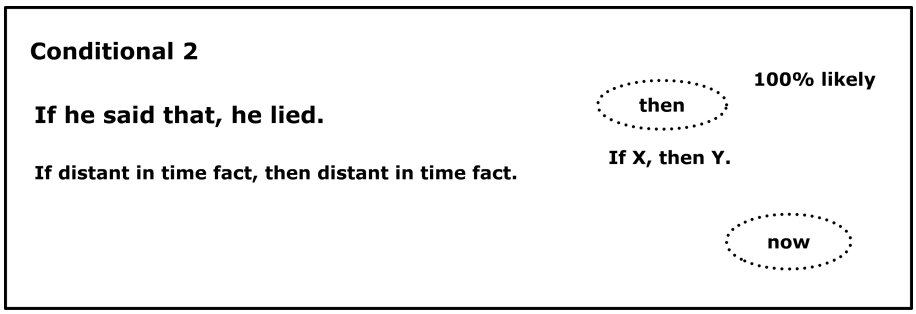


Figure 8.20: Conditional 2

This is a distant [past time] sort of Zero Conditional [Figure 8.20], and, as it is set in past time [and refers to '*he*'], it is seen as a factual interpretation of a particular event, rather than about a general truth. However, general truths about the past can be talked about using this combination of forms as well: *If you practised witchcraft in 17th century England you ran the risk of being burnt at the stake.* Like the example in Conditional 1 above, the lexical content determines whether we are talking about specific factual sequences or general truth factual sequences.

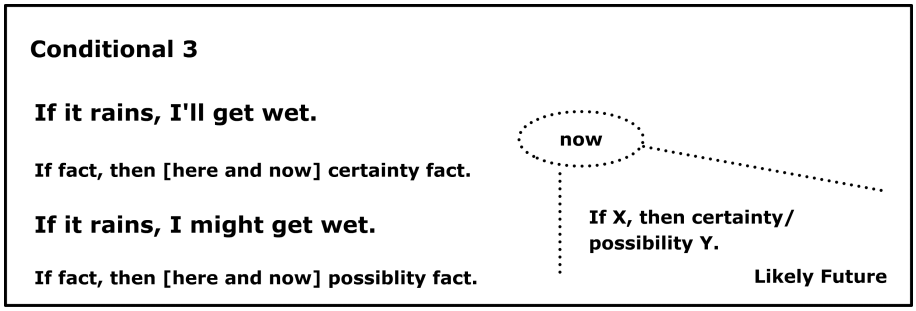


Figure 8.21: Conditional 3

These examples of the traditional 1st Conditional[Figure 8.21] show the difference in meaning depending on the modal/modifying verb used. These conditionals are about likely future factual events. The consequence of the *if* condition is seen from our here and now perspective I *will* [or *might*] get wet. The future consequence is viewed from now.

Figure 8.22: Conditional 4

This traditional 2nd Conditional [Figure 8.22] is less likely than the 1st Conditional in the previous example and this is shown by the distant verb forms used. It is a future form [*if* I am playing the lottery] and the distant fact of winning is seen as being possible in the future, that is still *real*, however *unlikely*. In this case I am realistic about my chances of winning [they are very, very small]. If I am *not* playing the lottery then, *without changing any grammar*, it becomes an unreal conditional. The context determines whether it is real or unreal. On the other hand if I am playing the lottery and I'm optimistic then I might say: '*If I win the lottery, I'll buy a big house.*' Personal choice and the exact context is very important here. Using this kind of example would enable you to discuss choice and context with your learners. They would have to chose the idea - *likely, unlikely, unreal* - and personalise the conditional for themselves. Conditionals should be psychologically real to the learners.

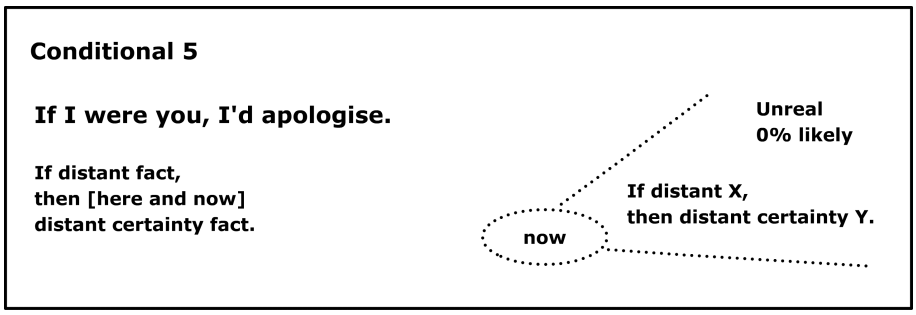


Figure 8.23: Conditional 5

This second example of the traditional 2nd Conditional [Figure 8.23] is clearly unreal and counter factual: *I am not you*. As it is unreal, it is 0% likely i.e. *impossible*. This next example is also unreal and impossible [with the current state of technology] but is about the past.

(8.7.28) If you went back to the London of the 1670s, you would see an awful lot of rebuilding after the Great Fire.

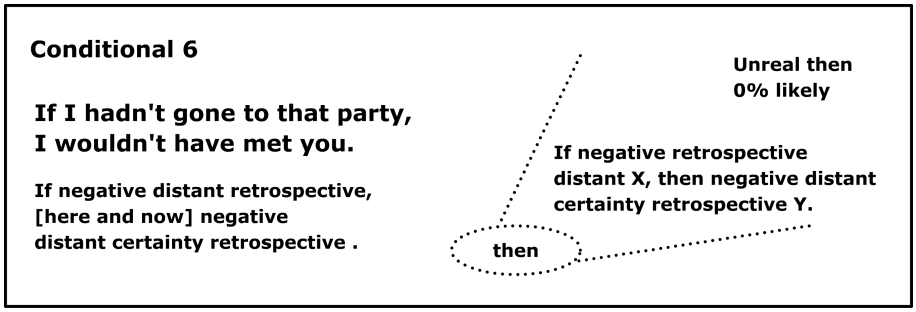


Figure 8.24: Conditional 6

This traditional 3rd Conditional [Figure 8.24] is *unreal* as it is speculation about events which did not happen; which are contrary to the known facts: *I did go to the party and I did meet you*. The '*I wouldn't have met you*' clause uses the distant negative form of *wouldn't* [meaning *certainty not*] and the retrospective form because we are looking back to the unreal past.

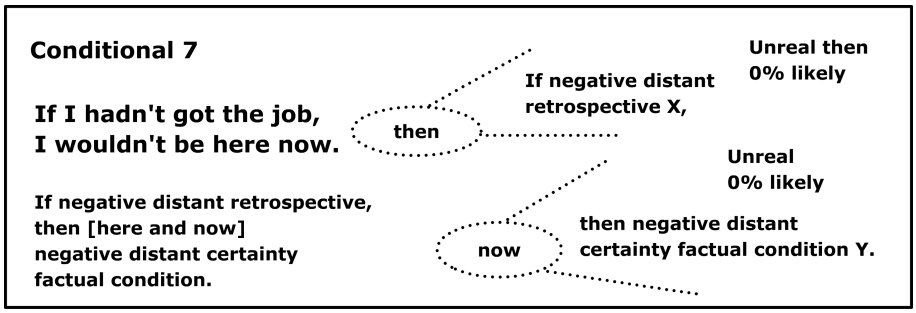


Figure 8.25: Conditional 7

This last example [Figure 8.25] is a so-called Mixed Conditional which combines an *unreal past* and *unreal present*. The reality is: *I did get the job and I am here now.*

We can bring all these examples together into an overview diagram [see Figure 8.26 below]. This is, like the verb pathways diagrams, not a diagram which should not be presented to learners but one which should be constructed with learners over time.

Conditionals use the *form meaning ideas* and *modal/modifying verb ideas* presented in this grammar; they use the *cardinal perspectives* and *distance in time, formality and reality* ideas we have looked at; and they show how *co-text* and *context* combine with all of these to create meaning. They are a demonstration that the ideas of our re-imagining of grammar are valid and are used consistently throughout the language.

The traditional grammar of English, modelled on the grammar of Latin, suggests that there are huge areas of inconsistency of verb form use ['*The form is past but the meaning is not.*']. Conditionals are only one area with exceptions and *special subjunctive uses*. In our re-imagining of English grammar this is not the case. The distance idea explains all verb form use in past, present and future, and in conditionals. Traditional grammar is aimed at making it easy to *teach* past forms, present forms and future '*tenses*'. Distance grammar is aimed at enabling an *understanding* of all verb form uses.

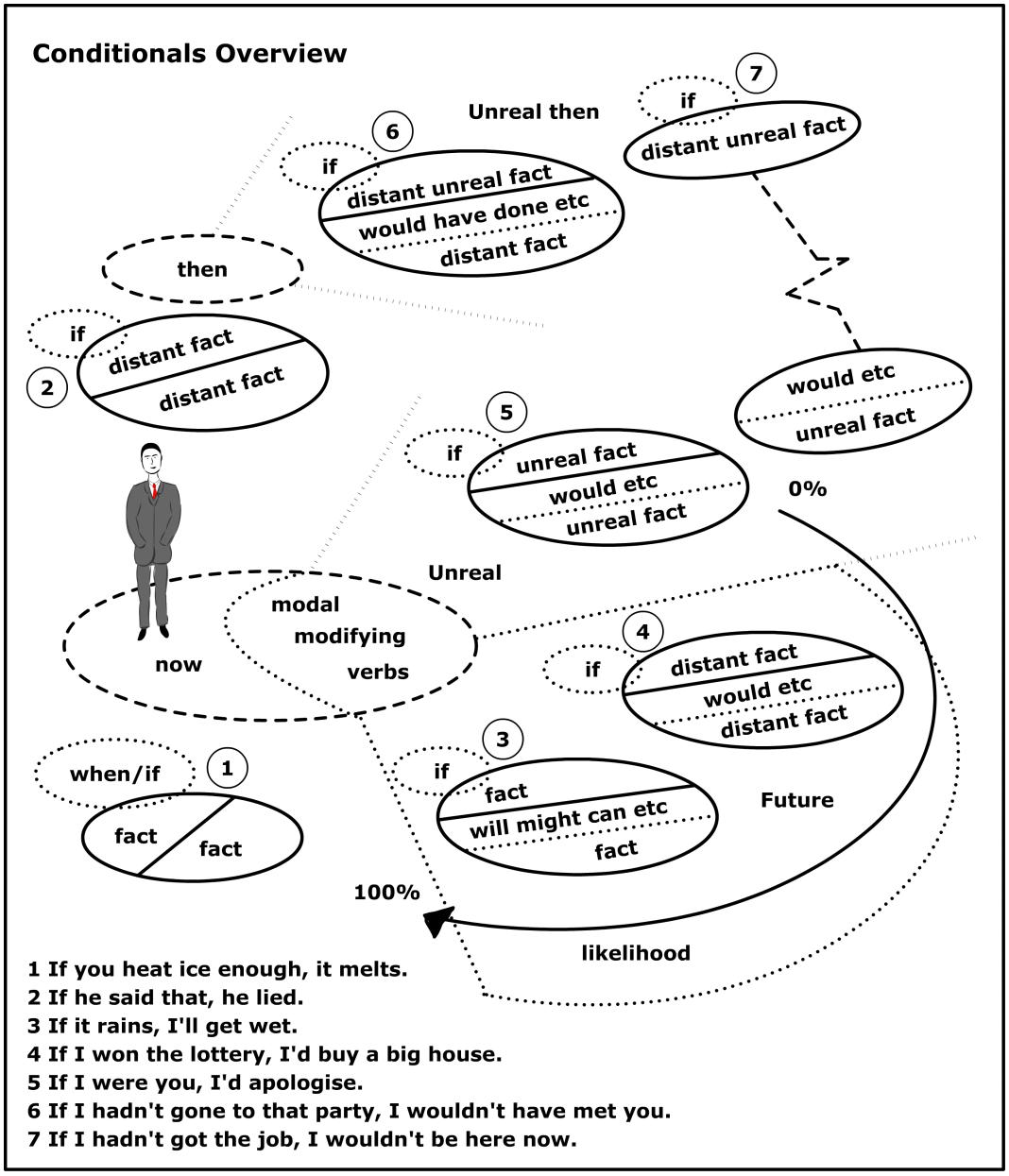


Figure 8.26: Conditionals Overview

Reported Speech

Reported speech is when we report something some said or something we said in anther time and/or place. Distant verb forms can be used to *distance* the reporter from the original speaker *if they wish to do so*. To distance themselves in *time* – form what was said in the past; to distance *themselves* from the speaker – *she said it not me*; or to distance themselves from the the *reality* of what was said – it is not longer true.

(8.7.29) Two hours ago

A: I love you.

Now

B: She said she loves me.

[She said: not me: distant; loves: close]

or

B: She said she loved me.

[She said: not me: distant; loved: distant]

or

B: She says she loves me.

[Not distanced]

In this case the speaker has a choice how to report what was said. Note that the verb *says* though might have the idea that the person has said it more than once, but this is not always the case. A further example of choice in reporting is given below.

(8.7.30) A and B are at a railway station somewhere in England.

A: Ask that guy what time the next train to Birmingham is.

B goes to talk to C

B: Excuse me. What time is the next train to Birmingham?

C: In ten minutes love.

B returns to A

B: He says it's in 10 minutes.

[not distanced]

or

B: He said it's in 10 minutes.

[He *said* [not me]: distant; *it's*: not distanced]

The information [*it's in ten minutes*] is not distanced as the information is still true. In other cases when you are reporting what someone said in the past and it is not an issue whether it is still true then you distance everything to make it clear that it was *he* or *she*, *not you* who said it; it was *said* [not *says*]; and what was said was in the *past*.

(8.7.31) He said he wasn't happy about the situation.

Reported speech uses the distance system. There's nothing difficult about it if you understand the distance system.

There is, though, another issue that many, especially younger, people do not use reported speech in casual conversation. They use direct speech framed by the verbs '*like*' and '*goes*' and by '*turned to me and said*'.

(8.7.32) I asked this question the other day. I was like - do we, in the modern world of the 21st Century, need to bother with all this? And John goes – yeah well. And we're all – yeah that's right. Then John turned to me and said – you can't be serious mate. And I'm like – it's a thought, innit?

8.8 Other Conventions

The areas above, verb pathway conventions; time phrase conventions; noun identification and pathway conventions and question conventions, are areas we should explicitly and systematically teach our learners. Conditionals and reported speech should also be taught but as outcomes of the meaning ideas of the distance system, used with co-text. There are, however, other aspects of English grammar which need to be dealt with - these are mainly the conventions of individual words, the micro grammar of the language, and word order.

To take one example of word conventions, the difference between *so* and *such* is mainly a matter of collocation and colligation [e.g. *He's such a busy person*; *She's so busy*; *talking such nonsense*; *that's so nonsensical*] which will be apparent when they are met in texts.

Word Order

The larger conventions of word order are more problematic. There are phrases with fixed word order – like idioms [e.g. *black and white; at the end of the day; That'll be the day*], sentence heads [e.g. *In my opinion*] and verb phrases [e.g. *have been meaning to go*] and these can be taught to learners, and they can practise using them.

Noun Phrases

While we have looked at some ways in which nouns are identified and modified [*the identifier + adverb + adjective + noun + noun + clause sequence*] it is still difficult to teach learners how to produce sentences containing complex noun phrases like in the two examples below:

(8.8.1) According to the DfE, at least *a fifth of schools in eight local council areas* also failed to achieve the basic standard.

(8.8.2) Facing down [1] *the biggest challenge of his almost twelve years in power*, [2] *the strong man Russian prime minister* insisted that [3] *the disputed parliamentary election which triggered the protests* was not flawed.

[Both examples from the Daily Telegraph, 15.12.11]

Such language needs to be noticed and analysed [*What are the foci of the sentence? Are they defined? How are they defined? Are they modified? How are they modified?*] at the very minimum, and learners need to be asked to write complex phrases, especially in academic English courses as not many learners will end up as Telegraph journalists. There are no useful *rules* to be learnt beyond the conventions of the noun pathway of choices we have looked at above. Everything else has to be noticed.

The Web of Lexical Primings

The English language is a system of words in a web of lexical primings: the w+ of the Lexicon of the Associative Model. There are clear ideas which are important to teach in a pedagogical grammar – the ideas of English and the conventions discussed in this book – but much much more remains to be learnt, though not necessarily taught, as it would be impossible to teach all of English. A large responsibility lies on the learner to notice [with the teacher's guidance in the classroom, and without such guidance outside] and learn a lot of English – precise word meanings, word collocations, word colligations etc. Basically - what do words mean and how are they placed in association with other words? They need to be in the right state of mind to approach this task. They should be equipped with the ideas of distance, the ideas of form meaning and an understanding of the basics of the conventions of the sequence [especially verb and noun pathways of choices], and know that they can learn the rest of English and its grammar because of their grounding in this knowledge.

8.9 Noticing and Learning

Learning the rest of the language is best done through short texts, written and spoken, and focusing on and noticing the language found there, and then by extending the learners' engagement with the language through supplementary exercises that can be based on the language of the texts. Repeatedly meeting words in authentic-like or authentic text is the key to learning. Individual words should be dealt with in context when they are met in a text, noticed and processed in some way and then re-met [and reprocessed] in other texts.

8.10 The Language Syllabus

A central argument of this grammar is that the most important parts of the planned language programme are the distance system; the key ideas; the conventional combinations of verb pathways; time phrases; the ideas of

questions; the meaning of nouns and the conventions of noun pathways. These areas should be taught in the first two years of learning [together with learning a core vocabulary of at least the most common 2000 words] and afterwards this knowledge will be refined and deepened through processing more texts [both spoken and written]. All the other ideas of English will be met incidentally, partly during this process but mostly afterwards by focusing on word meaning, collocation and colligation as the words come up. Some word-ideas which are less common will be met less often but that is the nature of the language and these word-ideas are less useful to general users because of their relative infrequency. If a learner needs these words then they will meet them, notice them, come to understand them through their existing knowledge, or by using a dictionary, and learn them. While not everything taught is learnt, not everything which should be learnt can or should be taught.

Once a learner starts to specialise in different areas of English according to their interests [academic English, sports English, movie English, journalistic English etc.], certain other ideas will appear more frequently and will be found to be more important in the particular genre of English they are interested in. The learner who is interested in a specific genre will meet these genre-specific ideas more often and will have to notice and deal with them, using their knowledge base to help them.

The first years of learning the most general and useful ideas [the G[DMC] system] and noticing the most common collocations and colligations of the most common words in English is learner training for when they will have to extend their learning into more specialised areas and to act and learn independently. An independent learner is one who takes the decisions about which words to learn and uses their existing knowledge of the key ideas and conventions to help them process texts. The first two years of learning is aimed at equipping learners to be able to learn what they want and need to learn. At an advanced level all learners should be specialising in different genres and the course content - if such a course at this level is possible - should reflect this.

8.11 Teaching/Learning

Teaching and learning the G[DMC] system is a matter of focusing on word and form meanings and on the conventions of the sequence - mainly the verb and noun pathways of choices. The short-cut rules of use approach of much learning material obscures the search for meaning which is at the heart of language use. The learner needs to develop an active prospective grammar, which means learning the full meanings of as many words as possible and how these are combined in the sequence. Compare:

(8.11.1) I am really annoyed.

(8.11.2) I really am annoyed.

The meaning of the individual words and their meaning placement in the sequence controls the communicative meaning. The speaker has a choice of how to place the words and this choices reflects the speaker's associative understanding and activates the listener's associative understanding.

The distance-meaning-connectedness of the sequence is the key. This applies to more complicated sequences as well. Compare:

(8.11.3) I really have been annoyed.

(8.11.4) I have really been annoyed.

(8.11.5) I have been really annoyed.

(8.11.6) I have been annoyed, really.

It is not just a matter of being able to place '*really*' in at least four different positions, what matters is the meaning effect of doing so. To develop our learners' G[DMC] we need to teach the meanings and conventions outlined in the grammar and also equip the learners with all four skills - speaking [including pronunciation], listening, reading and writing - *and* the ability to engage in the following analytical process.

(8.11.7) T: Listen. [or Read]

[Learners listen or read]

T: Stop.

T: [Checking] What *has* been said?

[Learners answer]

T: [Exploring possibilities] What *can* be said next?

[Learners brainstorm]

T: [Narrowing options] What *might* be said next?

[Learners speculate]

T: [Prediction/commitment] What *will* be said next?

[Learners predict]

T: Listen.

T: [Checking] What *was* said next?

[Learners confirm]

[Repeat]

This sequence, which encourages the *activation* of the prospective grammar, is useful for traditional example sentences - as an abstract analysis of probable language [if the examples are such] - but it is infinitely more useful when applied to fully contextualised and meaningful communicative situations. Understanding the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when* etc., and power relationships and the external references of a situation enable a learner to move more confidently from an understanding of what *could* be said next to a good idea of what *will* be said next - and this is the ultimate goal of an active prospective grammar.

Contextualisation is more than putting a word into a sentence - that is co-textualisation. Learners need fully contextualised examples. Fewer fully contextualised examples worked through in depth are more useful for meaning-learning than many sentence co-textualisations, though these are useful for more mechanical pattern processing learning.

Whole language learning [for teens and adults] involves engaging with and analysing meaningful language in meaningful contexts. It involves applying the analysis to what is new [being learnt], to what the learner almost knows and to what the learner knows. Learners should be actively analysing what is new and practising what is almost known and what is known.

9 Conclusions and Further Thoughts

All English is made up of sounds which collocate into words. All these words have meaning and grammar. They collocate with other words in conventional ways and their colligations determine where they will appear in text. The whole visible language is the outcome of the interaction between words; an interaction which is conventional and understandable because it is conventional. This is the Associative Model of English. Words are placed together because of their various associations and the language primes its learners and users to expect and produce, through an active prospective grammar, the conventional language of associations.

English [like other word order languages; unlike different languages] follows the conventions of the sequence. Sometimes this is a strict sequence of what is allowable, like the pathway of an idiom or set phrase, or in the pathway of choices sequence of verbs or nouns; sometimes it is looser, like where to place '*really*', or prepositions of time: at the beginning or ending of a tell. Both speaker and listener share many primings; knowledge of the meanings and potential meanings of words and knowledge of realised meaning when words are associated with other words in a context and with co-text; and an understanding of the conventions of English. This enables them to communicate.

The G[DMC] system is a coherent and powerful pedagogical description of English grammar - it is an active prospective grammar which allows us to construct and understand utterances, sentences and texts.

By using this active prospective grammar we produce and process language [extremely quickly] at *one* level, one word at a time. Words, however, because of conventional primings, can trigger other words in conventional strings creating set piece language or chunks, which are utilised for their familiarity to aid both speaker and listener; building up meaning in sequences of conventional language. This helps the speaker to look ahead to what they want to say and helps take them there, and it helps the listener by taking them along. These chunks help us to communicate extremely rapidly and we do not need to pay *too* much attention to each individual word - instead we process the chunks as chunks. This is a second level of language processing and we alternate between the levels of processing as required. In other stretches of language which are less constrained than idiomatic chunks we will have to process the words word for word. We have to pay attention to verb phrases, for example, because, although the potential sequence is fixed, we need to know which verbs have been chosen that particular time.

Language conventions, though, are a double-edged sword. They help us speak, listen and read fluently because we can use our knowledge of chunks, and our knowledge of primings to narrow the probabilities of what can follow certain words, and our knowledge of how conventions structure the text within and beyond sentences to make producing and understanding language easier. Conventional language is *probable language*; we could, if we wanted to, given a large enough corpus, calculate the precise probability of one word following another. Conventional language is understandable language but, as we predict and expect certain language, sometimes we will hear what we *expect* to hear because of our primings and we will misunderstand; or we will even hear what we *want* to hear. Perhaps bad listeners rely too much on their knowledge of language and do not monitor the incoming speech closely enough to really listen to it. Our knowledge of English conventions and expected language helps us to understand rapid speech but can also let us down when something novel, unconventional or unexpected is said and we do not notice.

9.1 Micro Grammar

Grammar can be broadly divided into micro and macro grammar as shown in Figure 9.1 and these will now be discussed.

At the micro level each word of English has its grammar [its form, collocations and colligations], and it intermeshes [in ways far too complicated to completely describe in a simple enough way, let alone teach] with other words to produce text [asks and tells; sentences and utterances; paragraphs and essays etc.]. The most common words of the language need to be systematically taught to learners while most words in the language will have to be met and processed by the learners themselves.

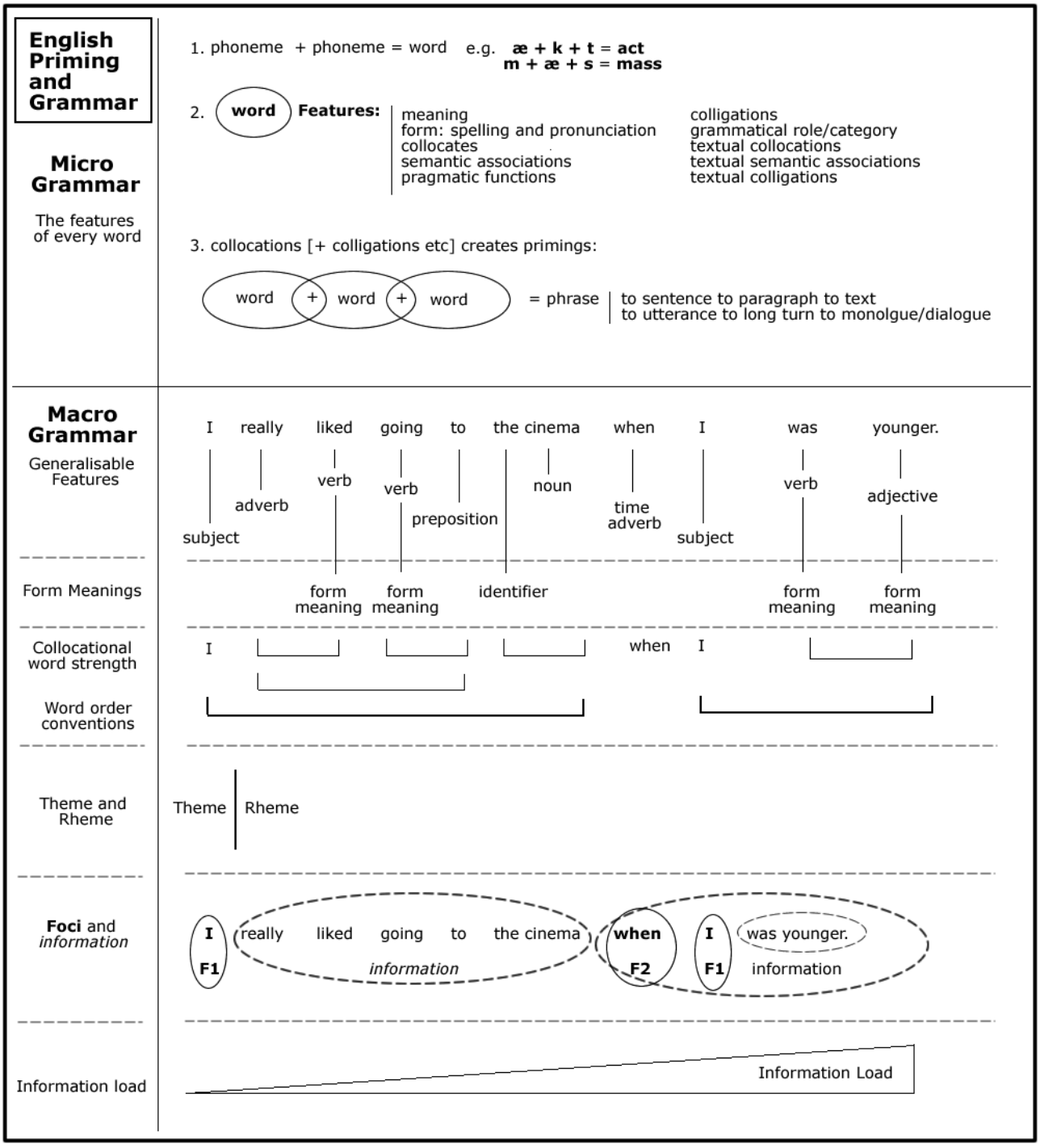


Figure 9.1: English Priming and Grammar

9.2 Macro Grammar

This grammar includes the form meanings of verbs [the Do, Doing, Did and Done Forms], Do-ing and Done adjectives and Do-ing nouns. It also includes the conventions of the sequence and the pathways of choice, and the deep structure of the distance ideas which structure text [collocational distance; theme to rheme; Foci/Information etc.] and the distance ideas which orientate our ideas to the distances of time, formality and unreality. These elements of the macro grammar need to be taught to the learner.

9.3 The G[DMC] System

In this pedagogical grammar of English ideas we have looked at the three parts of the grammar system. Figure 9.2 shows elements of the G[DMC] System applied to an example sentence.

G[DMC]: Distance

There are five elements to the orientation Distance dimension of the G[DMC] System:

- Here and There: This and That: Space Distance
- Us and Them
- Now and Then: Time Distance
- Real and Unreal: Reality Distance
- Informal and Formal: Formality Distance

There are also the ideas of the distance between words being related to the strength of their meaning relationship and that the topic mentioned first in a sentence or utterance is '*close*', while information which is added about these is '*distant*'. Within the sentence or utterance itself there are one or more Foci and the Information associated with it.

G[DMC]: Meaning

Form Meanings

- Close objective facts: Do Forms
- Distant objective facts: Did Forms
- Marking a condition: Be
- Processes: Do-ing Forms
- The resulting condition: Done Forms
- Retrospective forms
- Prospective forms
- Emphasizing the truth: Do

Modal/Modifying Verbs

- Possibility and Doubt: may and might
- Certainty: will and won't
- Distant Certainty: would and wouldn't
- Real Potential: can and can't
- Distant Potential: could and couldn't
- Strong Requirement: shall
- Desirability: should and shouldn't

- Probability: should and shouldn't
- Necessity: Obligation: must and mustn't
- Necessity: Logical Conclusion: must and can't

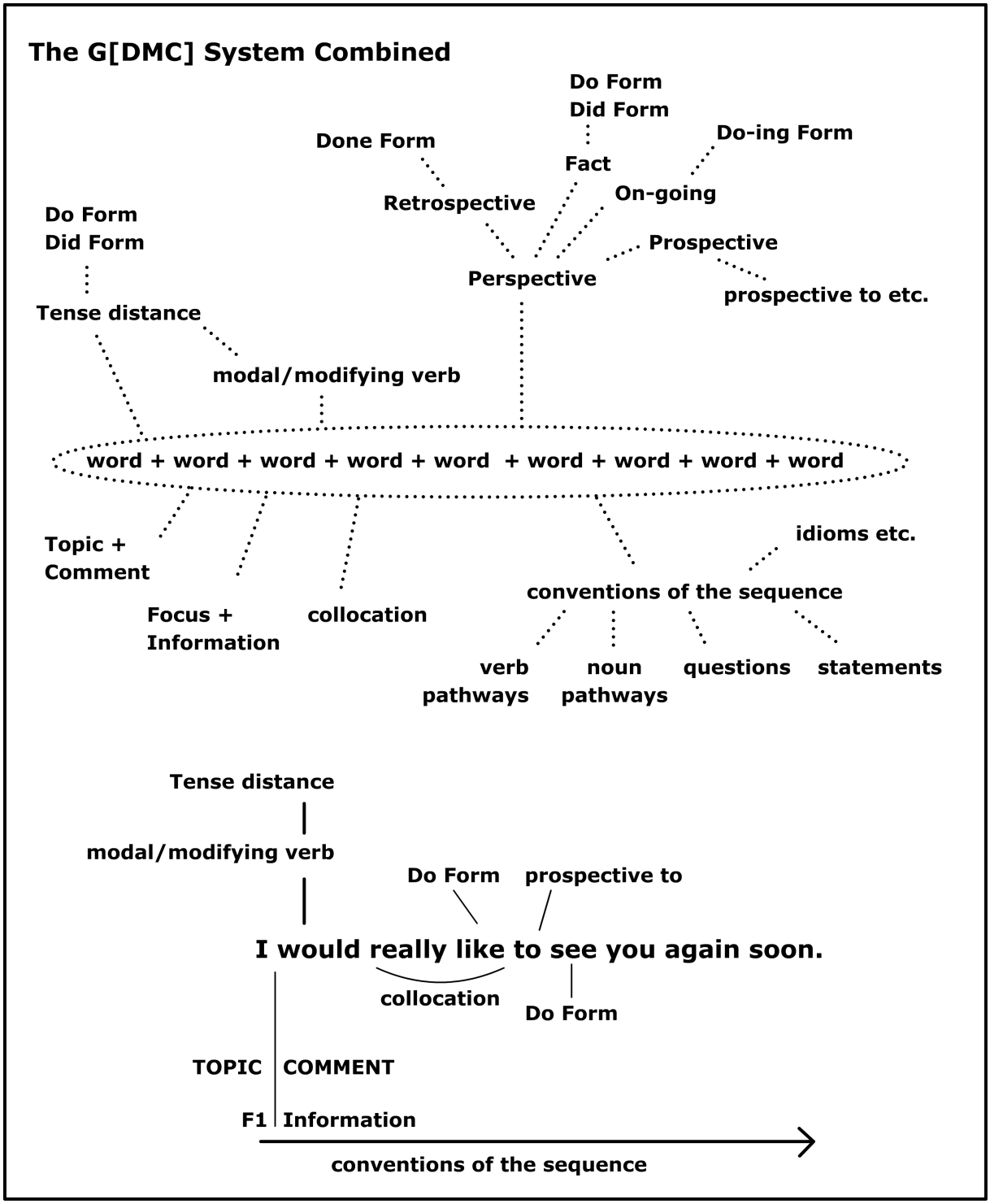


Figure 9.2: The G[DMC] System

G[DMC]: Conventions

The language conventions which can and should be taught include:

- the Power Conventions of verbs which create the verb pathways of choices.
- the Power Conventions of time: Distant and Non-Distant.
- the Power Conventions of noun pathways of choices: the role of identifiers and other elements modifying and identifying nouns which create the noun pathway of choices.
- the Power Conventions of marking questions.

We also explored the role of co-text and context in creating meaning and the limitations of the idea of synonymy.

9.4 Analysis

The two figures below show a short text interpreted using some elements of the G[DMC] system. The text is adapted from a text from http://web.orange.co.uk.

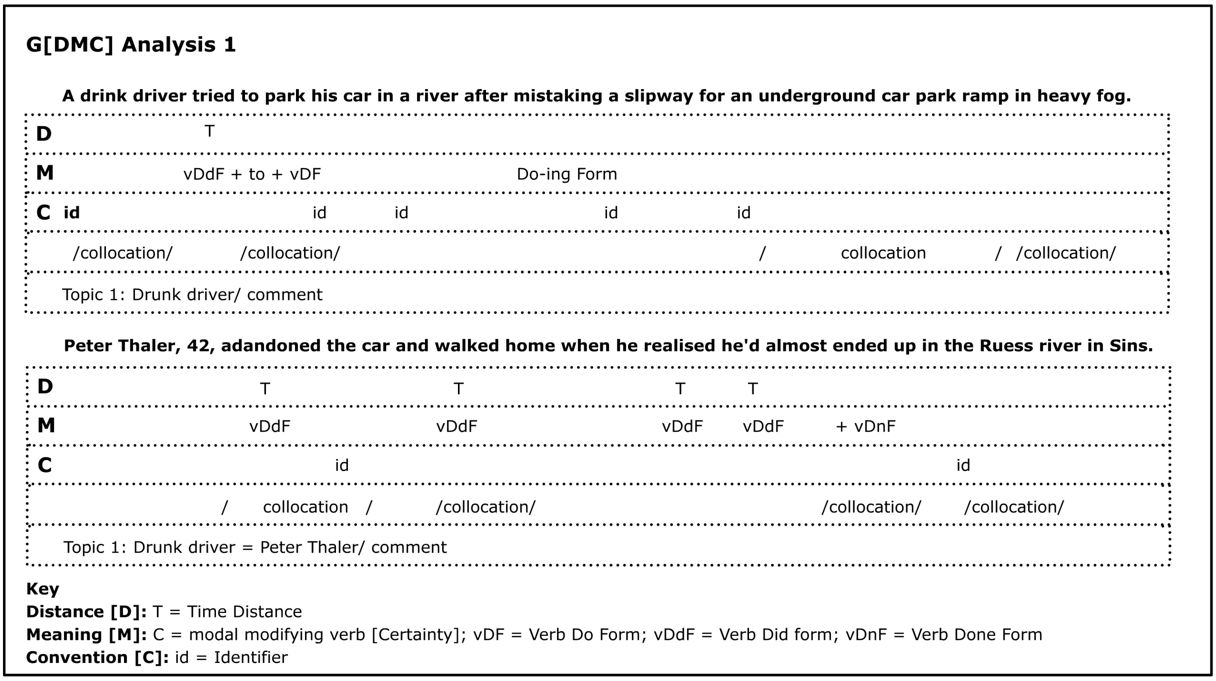


Figure 9.3: G[DMC] Analysis Part 1

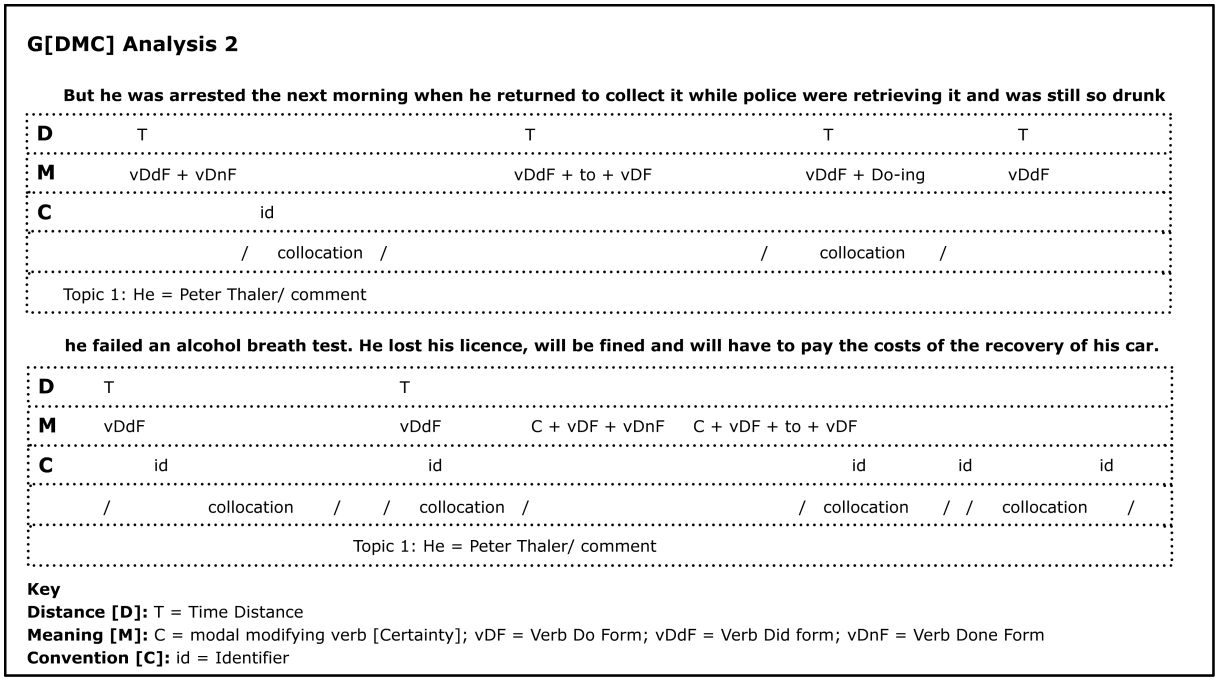


Figure 9.4: G[DMC] Analysis Part 2

I have mentioned that this pedagogical grammar is a small set of key meanings and I have outlined the key ideas of English grammar which need to be taught to learners. I have shown how a coherent pedagogical grammar can be built on the interplay of distance, meanings and conventions.

Language is made up of words with conventional meaning and they interact in conventional ways which are too difficult to accurately describe [beyond what we have looked at in this book] in a pedagogical grammar but not too difficult to learn. We should only teach what we can usefully teach and learners need to learn what they need to learn by using what we have taught them: their knowledge of distance – the five distance ideas and the distance between words and in sentences and utterances – their knowledge of words and word form meanings and their knowledge of the conventions of English: the conventional pathways of verbs and nouns and the conventions of questions and time phrases. The learner should be able to say *'I know about Distance; I know the twenty-five key ideas. I understand the conventions of the verb and noun pathways. I understand the ideas of questions. I know about time phrases and I have learned the most common 2000 + words. Knowing all this, I can learn everything else.'*. This should be their state of mind.

This pedagogical grammar is an enabling grammar. It gives the learners the knowledge and the understanding necessary for them to be able to learn the rest of the language.

The Grammar of Distance, Meaning and Conventions is a new description of the key ideas and conventions which the learners need to know. There are no half rules with inconvenient exceptions. There are no short cut rules which ignore meaning or understanding. It is clear and systematic. It re-imagines English grammar into a small number of key propositions which describe the key form meanings of the English verb, adjective and noun system and explains the conventions of the sequence [as far as these conventions can usefully be explained] and explains the deep structure of distance and its surface manifestations. It is an active prospective grammar. As a description of English grammar it is not exhaustive but it is essential; it is both teachable and learnable and it is what our learners need.

10 Afterword

This book has been written in the great Chomskian tradition of personal introspection. Rejecting fieldwork, Chomsky has spent decades in his office attempting to construct a universal grammar for all languages by an introspective examination of the English language. The ambition and conceit of such an undertaking is breathtaking. My own endeavour has been slightly less ambitious: to construct, while travelling between Jelgava and Riga on the train, a working pedagogical grammar for only one language, that is English. Thanks must go to Chomsky though for the term *deep structure* which I have taken and redefined for my own purpose.

I would welcome your comments and thoughts on how successful I have been at re-imagining English grammar.

11 An Action Plan for MELTs

A Monolingual English Language Teacher [MELT], as opposed to a Bilingual English Language Teacher [BELT] or Poly-Lingual English Language Teacher [PELT] [1], has significant advantages as a teacher of English.

- You can provide a good model of spoken English if you temper your level of idiomacity. If you can do this then your experience of modifying your native language in order to engage with non-native speakers and speakers of other varieties of English, and this modified language itself, and how you engage with such interlocutors in order to communicate effectively, can be a model of effective communication for your learners.
- You have an intuitive command of the primings of *your* variety of English and these can be an aspirational model for your learners, or a model from which they can take the primings they want.

Yet as a MELT you have significant disadvantages as a teacher of English.

- You have not learned English as your learners are learning it and you do not have useful insights to offer in how to learn effectively from their standpoint.
- You are not able to offer quick translations of single vocabulary items which have exact equivalences in English and your learners' L1.
- You will not be able to explain these ideas of English grammar except in English.
- This will lead to problems of having to use more complex language to *explain* something simpler. Thus to directly explain the sentence - *I've been to Rome twice* - you would have to say something like: *I possess the done condition of being in Rome twice*, which is more complicated than the example itself, so something to avoid doing. If you could use the L1 you could completely avoid the necessity of using *being* to explain *been*. It is difficult to clearly and successfully paraphrase an English idea in simpler terms in English.
- So as a MELT you would have to use diagrams and concept check questions using other grammatical forms to check this example, such as: *Was I in Rome?* [Yes] *How many times?* [Twice] *When?* [In the past/I don't know] *Is it important exactly when?* [No] *Am I looking back or forward from now?* [Back] *Are the actions completed?* [Yes]. And so on. You dance around the idea until you think that the learners have got the idea that it is *a retrospective form looking back from here and now, talking about past conditions which you possess as experience as part of you, now*. Using the learners L1, on the other hand, you could directly approach the idea in terms which the learners are sure to understand and draw parallels with how the idea is, or is not, expressed in L1 and also discuss the differences between this English idea and others.

If you are a MELT then you have a [small] number of options to cope with your lack of L1 proficiency.

1. Learn your learner's L1, or at least enough of it to explain these ideas of English grammar.
2. Have these ideas translated into your learner's L1 by one of your local colleagues [a BELT or PELT], together with information about L1-English parallels, and work together to create learning resources based on this translation.
3. Team teach with a local colleague.
4. Only teach higher levels where you can use English to explain this grammar.

If you are working in a multilingual situation then you will have to use English, diagrams and clear concept check questions. In teaching, as in life, it is better to be a PELT or a BELT than a MELT.

[1] Bilingual Teacher is used here to denote a speaker of two languages with sufficient proficiency to teach in both i.e. at least two 'levels' above their learners' abilities. Polylingual Teacher describes someone with a two level advantage in more than two languages.

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